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STUDIES  
IN  
PERSIAN LITERATURE  
FIRST SERIES

BY

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ALIGARH

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## *Preface*



## Preface

THIS volume was to deal only with the Ghazna-wide period. I have digressed, therefore, from my original plan—especially in the introductory chapters. But the digression, I hope, has its value: it links the pre-Ghaznawide period with the Ghaznawide and incidentally reveals the Sasanianism of Muhammadan Persia—the Iranian nucleus concealed within a zonal crystallisation of Islam but distinctly visible when the light is cut out or the Arab expelled. Nevertheless, the Ghaznawide period, which drags its weary length along through a good number of pages does remain the matrix of the book—wherefore, the treatment of both Firdawsí and Minuchihrí *in extenso*.

The canons of criticism here adopted are not arbitrary. I have not been swayed, I believe, by Persophile proclivities to acclaim with Shiblí Nu'mání

ایران کی خاک فنون لطیفہ کی قابلیت میں بھی سب سے ممتاز تھی  
اور بالخصوص شاعری اس کا خمیر تھا۔ اسلام فی اس خاص جوہر کو  
زیادہ چمکایا اور اس حد تک پہنچایا کہ تمام دنیا کی شاعری ایک  
طرف اور صرف ایران کی شاعری ایک طرف<sup>1</sup>

The soil of Persia was also the most favourable of all for the productivity of the fine arts—particularly of poetry which was its own speciality. Islam brought out the latent possibilities so fully that the poetry of Persia counterbalances that of the entire world.

<sup>1</sup> Shiblí Nu'mání *Shi'ar-ul-'Ajam*, Vol. 1 p. 2

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—which is at once hyperbole and euphemism, for it exaggerates, on the one hand, the worth of Persian verse and minimises, on the other, the effect of the Qur'an's adverse verdict on poetry.

And as to the poets those who go astray follow them ;  
Do you not see that they wander about bewildered in every valley  
And they say that which they do not do ? <sup>1</sup>

Did Islam contemplate a strangulation of poetry or its revival ? Was poetry popular because of Islam or in spite of it ? To call a depressant a stimulant may be poetical, for it certainly arrests attention, but it is not critical, and therefore should find no place on the second page of a work that strives to be critical.

Nor have I shared the enthusiasm of Prof. E. G. Browne who finds Firdawsí's lyrics under-rated<sup>2</sup> and his epic over-estimated<sup>3</sup> though, as he says, "it is impossible to argue about matters of taste, especially in literature." It is difficult, however, to resist the conclusion that, unconsciously perhaps, he has himself effected "a reversal of unanimous verdicts which is always an alluring aim of some European historians." <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Qur'an XIX. 224-226. Translated by Muhammad 'Ali.

<sup>2</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. II. p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. II. p. 142.

<sup>4</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 226.

**Ibn Qutayba's judgment,**

I have not regarded any ancient with veneration on account of his antiquity, nor any modern with contempt on account of his being modern but I have taken an impartial view of both sides giving every one his due and amply acknowledging his merit.<sup>1</sup>

though primarily passed on ancient and modern poets admits of a wider application and I have therefore hailed it as a "kindly Light amid the encircling gloom."

A word or two about the translation of the Persian passages—especially Persian verse. I feel it is more difficult to render good Persian into good English than to write good Persian or good English. At any rate, my inability to translate Persian to my own satisfaction has made me utilise Prof. Browne's translations wherever I could do so. His genius has made of good Persian exquisite English : I find his translations inimitable.

The digression on "Critics and Persian Literature" in the third chapter remains and is intended to remain a digression. The opinion of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch is entitled to respect and I respect his opinion. I have not therefore been led to criticise him from malevolence. Nor have I acted according to his own advice : "Murder your darlings." My source of trouble is a remark of

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholson : *A Lit. Hist. of Arabia*, p. 287.

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Oliver Cromwell's which has ever haunted me like a ghost. "Paint me as I am. If you leave out my scars and wrinkles I shall not pay you a shilling." My happiness lies in this that in attempting to obey Cromwell I can quote against myself the advice of Hafiz—

در حشمت سلیمان هر کس که شک نماید.

بر عقل و دانش او خندند مرغ و ماهی

Fowl and fish laugh at the wisdom and prudence of the fellow  
Who doubts the magnificence of Solomon.

and of Sa'di—

نه در هر سخن بحث کردن رواست

خطا بر بزرگان گرفتن خطاست

It is not proper to discuss every subject;  
To find the faults of elders is itself a fault.

There remains the pleasant task of adding a few personal touches. To the encouragement of my wife I owe this book and to her knowledge of gynaecology the technical terms in my translations of *Minúchihri*. The typing of the MS. was done by my friend Mr. Sharafat Ali who undertook the tedious work as a labour of love and who has my thanks, therefore, both for his love and his labour. Of the *Jamia Millia Press* and its young and

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enthusiastic director, Mr. Nur-ur-Rahman, I cannot speak too highly. Two years ago, the National University could not have brought out even half-a-dozen pages ; today, it has published some half-a-dozen books. Mr. A. M. Khwaja, the Principal, has effected, I believe, more than a mere change of the old order to new; he has evolved new order out of old confusion.

Amongst my friends in the sister University of Aligarh, I have especially to thank Professors Eric Dickinson, D. Hamer, and A.B.A. Haleem who have not only supplied me with very valuable information but have gone through the entire MS. with me. I have also to thank the librarians of either University, Messrs. Sayyid Muhammad and Bashiruddin, for their generous loan of books.

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*Jamia Millia Islamia*

*Aligarh, 3rd. Sept. 1923.*





*The Birth of Muhammadan Persia  
and the Persian Language*



## *The Birth of Muhammadan Persia*

THE fall of Astyages, the last king of Media, in 550 B.C. leads the historian to the rise of Cyrus, the first emperor of the first empire of Persia—the Achæmenian. The Median court “with its elaborate ceremonies and myriads of officials, the red and purple robes of the courtiers, their chains and collars of gold”<sup>1</sup> had become so degenerate that it had ceased to be the Home and Foreign Office of Media, and the Median homes participating, in turn, in the general surfeit of prosperity had become miniature courts—they were no longer the military barracks of the state. So that when Astyages collected an army and marched against Cyrus that very army seized his person and handed him over to the invader.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, the transfer of government was so rapid and facile that the Greeks did not regard Media “as having fallen but as having undergone an internal transformation.”<sup>3</sup>

After his victory, Cyrus, “the son of Cambyses, the King of Asia,” turned towards Lydia and the frontiers of Persia went with him. Cyrus, indeed, was always on Persian soil whether in Media (550 B.C.) or Lydia (546 B.C.) or Makran

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<sup>1</sup> *A History of Persia* by P. M. Sykes. Vol. I. p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> See the translation of the tablet of the *Annals of Nabonidus* in Sykes' *History of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> *A History of Persia* by P. M. Sykes. Vol. I. p. 139.

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or modern Afghanistan (539 B.C.) or Babylonia (538 B.C.). or elsewhere "in unknown lands amongst unknown tribes" at unknown times (538-529 B.C.). The work of conquest and annexation was continued by his successors—Egypt disappeared in 525 B.C. and Thrace with Macedonia and the Punjab with Sind became Persian satrapies so that there is stern Achæmenian truth<sup>1</sup>—and not the ludicrous vanity of modern Persia<sup>2</sup>—in the cuneiform inscription of Darius

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<sup>1</sup> Herodotus says that the ancient Persians were taught more especially to ride, to draw the bow, and to speak the truth.

<sup>2</sup> Sykes gives this amusing story in his *History of Persia*, Vol. II. p. 426.

When news was received of the crossing of the Persian frontier by the Russians, the nobles and officials waited with interest to see what action would be taken. The Shah (Fath-'Ali) appeared, robed in 'the robes of wrath' which were all of red, including a crown studded with rubies and with a huge ruby in his dagger-hilt. The nobles expected him to deliver sentence of death, as was customary when these robes were worn and listened to his utterances with awe. His Majesty protested that the ill-omened Russians had violated the sacred soil of Persia, and enquired, "If we send the household cavalry to attack them, what then?" The reply was, "May we be thy sacrifice! They would beat them back to Moscow." "And if we ourselves went?" The nobles gave no reply but grovelled on the ground, and wept at the thought of the woes the Russians would suffer. Incredible as it may appear, there is no doubt that Fath 'Ali Shah hoped the Russians would learn that the Shah had been seated on his throne wearing 'the robes of wrath' and that they would be struck with fear and retire.

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wherein he says :

I am Darius, the great King, the King of kings, King of lands peopled by all races, for long King of this great earth, the son of Vishtasp, the Achæmenian, a Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan of Aryan descent.

With Darius the Achæmenian empire reached its zenith. The succeeding Great Kings were not great kings but the name of Cyrus preserved what the arm of Cyrus had won so that for two centuries the Achæmenian continued to be the King of Kings, the overlord of Persia in three continents—Asia, Europe, and Africa. And doubtless the empire would have lasted longer but for the genius of the Macedonian Alexander who overthrew the Persians in the battles of the Granicus (334 B.C.), Issus (333 B.C.), and Arbela (331 B.C.), captured Ecbatana the summer capital of the Achæmenians, and a few months later, on the treacherous assassination of Darius Codomannus, the last scion of the Achæmenian race, by his own subjects, succeeded in establishing Macedonian rule throughout almost the entire length and breadth of the several lands subject to the Royal House of Persia. From 330 B.C. Persia lay in bondage at the feet of Macedonian and Parthian conquerors, but about 226 A.D. the Persians under Ardashir laid on the memorable field of Hormuz the foundation "of an illustrious

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dynasty—the Sasanian,<sup>1</sup> which ruled over a proud and contented people for four centuries, until the star of Muhammad arose in the desert of Arabia and overthrew the world.”<sup>2</sup>

Immortal in Persian history are these four centuries of Sasanian rule, for though the Sasanians have gone, Sasanianism remains and dominates while it remains. Witness, for example, the everlasting worship of the House of Sasan. Originally a sort of fear-worship rendered under the influence of Pahlawi and Zoroastrianism and the spell of Royalty and Divinity, it should have ceased after the advent of the Prophet when Pahlawi became a dead language and Zoroastrianism a fugitive faith and the claim of kings to divinity mere pretence and blasphemy. But it has lasted till to-day when Royalty has been stripped not only of its divinity but also of its sovereignty: the king can do no wrong because of his impotence. Obviously, what was an object of terror has become an object of love. If this change were due only to the recovery of Persia’s independence, then the Achæ-

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<sup>1</sup> Sasan, 5th in descent from Bāhman dirāz-dast (Longimanus), enters the service of Papak (Bahak), Prince of Pars, as a herdsman. Papak, warned in a dream of Sasan’s kingly origin, raises him to high honour and confers on him the hand of his daughter. Of this union, Ardashir is the offspring. See E. G. Browne’s *Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Sykes’ *History of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 425.

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menian period should have also received its share of Persia's homage. But the Sasanian has it all. And for this reason that it gave Persia not only its independence but also its integrity. The rise of Cyrus was but the rise of Persia; it was the rise of Ardashir that was the rise of Iran.

The Achæmenian period, indeed, belongs to the first dawn of Persia's history and its chronological remoteness and meagre representation in cuneiform inscriptions obscure its political and geographical grandeur. But apart from this, its proper place is quite as much in international history as in Persian. For as the Empire had embraced quite the larger portion of the then known world and had consisted of several states, at once dependent and independent, there was nothing to represent a compact, distinct, homogeneous Persia. But it was not so with the Sasanian Empire. The frontiers now are more restricted and the individuality of Persia consequently becomes more prominent. There are formidable adversaries who maintain a running fight and thus promote Persian solidarity: the wars between Persia and the Holy Roman Empire lasted with varying vigour and fortune till the defeat of either by the rising power of the Arabs. Moreover, between these neighbouring states, the religious differences agree with the political. The Romans were Christians or pagans; the



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Persians, fire-worshippers. And fire-worship was not only a religion but the religion and the state-religion exclusively of Persia. Religion thus becomes an additional factor for emphasising national unity. And last and most important of all, the all-pervading influence of one language and literature<sup>1</sup>—Pahlawi—has produced so distinct a consciousness of *Sasanianism* that it lingers on even after the lapse of centuries and the imposition of a foreign tongue, rule, and religion so that we hear the great Firdawsí, professedly an adherent of Islam, lament the death of Yazdigird, the last sovereign of the House of Sasan, with weeping and gnashing of teeth.

ز پرورده سیر آید این هفت گرد  
شود یگانه کشته چون یزدگرد  
بدینگونه بر تاجداري نمرود  
م از لشکر او سواری نمرود  
نمکنده تن شاه ایران بخاک  
پر از خون و پهلو بشمشیر چاک  
هانا که آن خاک گریبان شود  
روانش بدین سوگ گریبان شود

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کمی تاج-داری بدینسان ندید  
نه پیش از مسیح این سخن کسی شنید

The seven heavens tire of affording protection: the innocent is murdered like Yazdigird.

In such wise never did a king die—not even a rider from his army.

Fallen lay the king of Persia on the ground: blood-laden and side-smitten with a sword.

It was as though the Earth would weep and "Nature sigh through all her works".<sup>1</sup>

None ever saw a king in such wise; nor, before Christ, ever heard a tale like this.

Of the Arab invasion little need be said—because much has already been said about it in either hemisphere. Al-Qadisiyya (Nov. 635 A.D.) was the first great victory of the Arabs. Mada'in (Ctesiphon) fell in March 637 A.D. and the battle of Nahāvand in 642 A.D. completed the pulverisation of Persia by reducing the remaining provinces of Fars, Kirman, Makran, Sijistan, Khurasan, and Adharbayjan to the Arab Caliphate, and the Persians of mighty and imperial race to the position of subordinates—at best of "mawali" *i.e.* clients or adherents.<sup>2</sup>

Far more remarkable than the territorial conquest was the conversion of Persia to Islam attributed by Prof. Browne not so much to the

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<sup>1</sup> literally: "and with this woe burn her soul."

<sup>2</sup> Muir's *Caliphate: its Rise, Decline, and Fall*, p. 167.

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sword as to the intolerance of the Zoroastrian priests who had so persecuted other sects that the Arab conquest appeared in the light of a deliverance', and to the simplicity and elasticity of Islam in contrast to the irksome disabilities and elaborate purifications of Zoroastrianism. Prof. Browne concludes that the bulk of conversions were voluntary and spontaneous.

The conclusion is completely convincing. Not so the argument that leads to it.

The facts are simple and can be briefly told. Arab representatives had been sent to Persia to declare themselves missionaries, or soldiers, or tax-gatherers, according as Persia accepted Islam or war or the payment of Jazya. She spurned Islam and the poll-tax, invited the war—and disappeared. And so completely that whether by name, face, voice, or signature she could no longer be identified: the loss of speech, script, religion, and country had been simultaneous.<sup>2</sup> For several years, the Arabian soldier of God was seeking Paradise in Persia rather than the Persian paradise and from Prof.

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<sup>1</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Some Persians, however, fled to India—the progenitors of the modern Parsis; and a still smaller number was scattered in different parts of the fallen empire. The Ispahbads of Tabaristan, moreover, long survived the fall of their masters.

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Browne's presentment of the argument it would appear that the Persian was all this time on the *qui vive* to throw himself into the arms of this very Arab—so oppressive had been the Magian priests. A religious war is fought presumably to protect or propagate a religion. If then the beaten nation loses its faith does it not do so by a foregone conclusion ?

The fact remains however that the Arab was much more successful in Persia than in Syria. Obviously, therefore, Zoroastrianism was not popular. Was its unpopularity due to "its irksome disabilities" and its "intolerant priests?" Or to its intrinsic unfitness to retain its place amongst the great and permanent religions of the world ?

Had the Persians faith in their faith—an improbable probability, for Zoroastrianism teaches little of life save that life is little without formulae, doxologies, expiations, purifications and ecclesiastical penances<sup>1</sup>—the Arab victory over the Sasanian monarchy and the Magian clergy would have even led to a permanent establishment of Zoroastrianism. We should have witnessed the Holy Fires re-lighted in thanksgiving at the deliverance of Zoroastrianism from Magian government. But the fact was different. The

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<sup>1</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 99.

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religion once willingly adopted had become archaic—indeed so archaic that it was no longer a religion. It could not part with its embellishments without ceasing to be Zoroastrianism. It could not be altered and made useful and as it was it was useless. Zoroastrianism was not saving and serving the Persian; the Persian was saving and serving Zoroastrianism. Its imposition on the nation had been continued by the King and Court and with their fall it fell.

Therefore, whilst conceding fully the weight of Prof. Browne's reasoning, it seems likely that a general apathy or even antipathy not merely to a complex Zoroastrianism but even to Zoroastrianism itself was the premier cause of these "voluntary and spontaneous" conversions, to which military coercion, a belief in the divinity and hence in the irresistibility of Islam,—the *then* undoubted simplicity of Islam,—and hopes of material advancement may also have cumulatively contributed.

"The race and language, ancestral dignity, and political privileges of the *Arab* line continued for many generations to be paramount,"<sup>1</sup> *i. e.* from the fall of the Sasanian dynasty 652 A.D. to the decline of the Abbaside Caliphate of

<sup>1</sup> Muir's *Caliphate : its Rise, Decline, and Fall*, p. 176.

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Baghdad which may be said to have perceptibly commenced with the reign of al-Mutawakkil (847-861 A.D.). Even this period as Prof. Browne eloquently states is by no means a blank page in the intellectual life of Persia.

"It is, on the contrary, a period of immense and unique interest, of fusion between the old and the new, of transformations of forms and transmigrations of ideas but in no wise of stagnation or death. Politically, it is true, Persia ceased for a while to enjoy a separate national existence, being merged in that great Muhammadan Empire which stretched from Gibraltar to the Jaxartes, but in the intellectual domain she soon began to assert the supremacy to which the ability and subtlety of her people entitled her. Take from what is generally called Arabian Science—from exegesis, tradition, theology, philosophy, medicine, lexicography, history, biography, even Arabian grammar—the work contributed by Persians, and the best part is gone. Even the forms of state organisations were largely adapted from Persian models."

None the less, for at least a full century *i. e.* during the caliphate of the four orthodox Caliphs and the Umayyads, Persia lay completely at the feet of Arab governors, and it was only after the extinction of the Umayyad Caliphate that she was

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<sup>1</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 204.

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slowly able to reassert herself. Indeed, the Abbasides were brought to the throne by levies from Persia and it was but natural that they should rely upon the Persians for support. Ibrahim's injunction to Abu Muslim—"See that there be not one left in Khurasan whose tongue is the tongue of the Arabian but he be slain"—crystallises the Abbaside attitude towards Persia. Al-Mansur's dying advice to his son—"Make much of the people of Khurasan for verily they have expended their lives and means on our behalf"<sup>2</sup>—is not less significant of the Persianising of the Caliphate than the victory of al-Ma'mun over his brother al-Amin, which says Muir "was once more, like the overthrow of the Umayyads by the Abbasides, the victory of the Persians over the Arabs." With the accession, however, of al-Mutawakkil (847 A.D.) Persian influence at the metropolis of Islam declined—in favour of the Turks. But the vast Islamic Empire was now no longer under one Caliph and one rule. The provinces most remote from Baghdad were becoming free, and independent or semi-independent dynasties were arising—the Tahirides (820–872 A.D.); the Saffarides (868–903 A.D.); the Samanides (874–999 A.D.); and the Ghaznawides (962–1161 A.D.) plus some hereditary governorships and

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<sup>1</sup> Muir's *Caliphate : its Rise, Decline, and Fall*, p. 433.

<sup>2</sup> Muir's *Caliphate : its Rise, Decline, and Fall*, p. 464.

## *The Birth of the Persian Language*

'successful revolts'. The divorce, therefore, between Persia and Arabia, and their respective cultures became in a sense complete ; and Persian courts very naturally became the foci for the main absorption of Persian talent and genius, the first and earliest manifestation of which was the appearance of a distinct Persian language as ordinarily understood today viz. the post-Muhammadan literature of Persia.

Prof. Browne traces modern Persian literature to early Muhammadan or even late Sasanian times,<sup>1</sup> and Dawlatshah with his usual unreliability gives apocryphal narratives, indicative also of the chronological precedence of Persian verse over prose, that support Prof. Browne's statement. Says Dawlatshah<sup>2</sup>—

علا و فضلا بزبان فارسي قبل از زمانه اسلام شعر نيافته اند و ذکر  
اسامي شعرا ندیده اند اما در انواء افتاده که اول کسی که شعر  
گفت بزبان فارسی "هیرام گور" بود و سبب آن بود که او را محبوبه  
بود که او را دلآرام چنگی میبگفتند و آن منظوره ظریفه و نکته  
دان و راست طبع و موزون حرکات بود و هیرام بر او عاشق بود و آن  
کنیز را دائم بشکار و تماشای همراه بردی — روزی هیرام بحضور  
دلآرام در پیشه بشیری در آویخت و آن شیر را دو گوش گرفته بر م

<sup>1</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. I. P. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Dawlatshah ed. Browne E. G. pp. 28-29, 30, 30-31.



بست و از غایت تفاخر بدان دلآوري بزبان بهرام گذشت که

منم آن پیل دمان و منم آن شیر یله

و هر معنی که از بهرام واقع شدی دلآرام مناسب آن جوابی گفتم -  
بهرام گفت که جواب این سخن من چه داری؟ - دلآرام مناسب  
آن بگفت

نام بهرام ترا و پدرت بوجله

پادشاه را طرز این کلام بمذاق موافق افتاد و بحکما این سخن را  
عرض کرد - در نظم قانونی پیدا کردند فاما از يك يـت زياده  
نمي گفتندي.....

اما چون ملك اكاسره و عجم بدست عرب افتاد و آن قوم  
مبارك به دين اسلام و ظاهر کردن شريعت ميکوشيده اند و  
رسم عجم را می پوشيده می شايد که منع شعر نیز کرده باشند  
و يا از جهت قرات شعر مجهول شده باشد و در زمان بني اميه و  
خلفاي بني عباس خود حکام این دیار عرب بوده اند و شعر و انشاه  
و امثله بزبان عرب بود ،

خراج نظام الملك در سيرالملوك حکایت کند که از زمانه  
خلفای راشدین رضوان الله عليهم اجمعين تا بوقت سلطان محمود غزنوي  
قانون و دفاتر و امثله و مناشیر از درگاه سلاطین بمربي مي نوشته

## *The Birth of the Persian Language*

انند و بفارسي از درگاه سلاطين امثله نوشتن عيب بود - چون وقت وزارت حميد الملك ابو نصر كندري رسيد كه ابو وزير الب ارسلان بن چتر بيگ سلجوقي بود از كم بضاعتى خود فرمود تا آن قاعده را بر طرف ساختند و احكام و امثله از دواوين سلاطين بفارسي نوشتند و نيز حكايات كند كه امير عبد الله بن طاهر بروزگار خلفاي عباسي امير خراسان بود - روزي در نيشاپور نشسته بود شخصى كتابى آورد و بخرقه پيش او نهاد - پرسيد كه اين چه كتابست ؟ گفت اين قصه واقعي و عذراست و خوب كتابست كه حكما بنام شاه نوشيروان جمع كرده اند - امير فرمود كه ما مردم قرآن خوانيم بغير از قرآن و حديث پيغمبر چيزى نمي خواهيم ما را از اين نوع كتاب دركار نيست و اين كتاب تاليف مغانست و پيش ما مردود است - فرمود تا آن كتاب را در آب انداختند و حكم كرد در قلمرو من هر كجا كه از تصانيف عجم و مغان كتابى باشد جمله را بسوزانند - از اين جهت تا روزگار آل سامان اشعار عجم را ندیده اند و اگر احیاناً نيز شعر گفته باشند مذكور نكرده اند -

حكايات كند كه يعقوب بن ليث صفار كه در دبلر عجم اول كسى كه بر خلفاي بني عباس خروج كرد او بود پسرى داشت كوچك و او را بغايت دوست مي داشت - روز عيد آن

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كودك با كودكان ديگر جوز مي باخت — امير به مرگور رسيد  
و بنامهاي فرزند ساعتی با استاد — فرزندش جوز بينداخت و هفت  
جوز بگو افتاد و يکی بيرون جست — امير زاده نا اميد شد — پس  
از لحه آن جوز نيز بر سيل رجع القهقري بجانب گو غلطان شد —  
امير زاده مسرور گشت و از غايت ابتهاج بر زبانش گذشت كه  
غلطان غلطان مي رود تا لب گو

امير يعقوب را اين كلام بمذاق خوش آمد و ندما و وزرا را حاضر  
گردانيد و گفت كه اين شعر خوب هست و اين از جنس شعرا  
است — ابو دلف عجمي و ابن الكعب باتفاق بتقطيع و تحقيق مشغول  
شدند — اين مصراع را نوعي از هزج يافتند — مصراع ديگر بتقطيع  
موافق آن براي مصراع افزودند — و يك بيت ديگر موافق آن ضم  
کردند و «دويقي» نام کردند — و چند گاه دو بيتي ميگفتند تا فضلا  
لفظ دو بيتي را نيكو نهديدند گفتند كه اين چهار  
مصراعي ست «رباعي» مي شايد گفتن و چند گاه اهالي  
فضائل رباعي مشغول بودند و خوش خوش به اصناف سخفوري  
مشغول شدند — گل بود بسيزه نيز آراسته شد — اما بروزگار  
آل سامان شعر فارسي رونق يافت و استاد رودكي درين علم سر  
آمد بود — قبل از و شاعري كه در فارسي صاحب ديوان باشد  
نشنوده ام — پس واجب نمود كه ابتدا از استاد رودكي بنام

## *The Birth of the Persian Language*

Before the age of Islam, the learned and the wise have discovered no (traces of) Persian poetry nor have they met with any description of the names of (Persian) poets. *Bahram Gour* (Sasanian monarch reigned 420—441 A.D.) *was the first,* ✓ it is commonly reported, *to indite verses in the Persian language.* The reason adduced is that he had a sweetheart, Dil-Aram Changi by name, a lady elegant in repartee and subtle in discourse, of a straightforward disposition and agreeable deportment, of whom Bahram was so enamoured that he kept her constantly by him in excursions and on the hunting-field. One day, Bahram whilst tussling with a lion in a thicket, in Dil-Aram's presence, held the beast powerless by the ears, and in the height of pride, conscious of his courage, he spontaneously uttered

"I am the fierce elephant that holds a tiger in play."

Now to whatsoever Bahram would say Dil-Aram would make a suitable reply. "What reply hast thou", said Bahram, "to this verse of mine?"

"Bahram's thy name and thy father's Boo-je-be-le"

answered Dil-Aram in apposite (and impromptu) verse. The form of this answer was in conformity with the king's taste, wherefore he described (the incident) before the learned who initiated rules for versification. They continued, however, to compose not more than one half of a couplet .....

But when Persia, the empire of the Chosroes, fell into the hands of the Arabs, it was (but) proper that that sacred nation, whilst endeavouring (to extend) the Islamic faith and exhibit the Religious Law, *should suppress the customs of Persia and prohibit poetry* or that for the sake of (Koranic) recitation poetry should remain neglected.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, during the time of the Umayyads and the Abbasides, the governors of the provinces were Arabs, and poetry and prose and aphorisms were (expressed) through (the medium of) the Arabic language.

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<sup>1</sup> Supra, p. 4.

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The minister, Nidhamu'l-Mulk relates in his *Biographies of Kings*<sup>1</sup> that from the time of the four orthodox Caliphs, may the blessings of God be upon them all, until the time of Sultan Mahmud, the Ghaznawide, regulations, accounts, warrants, and mandates issuing from the Royal Court were written in Arabic and to write imperial communiques in Persian was considered a defect. When the time arrived for the ministry of 'Amidu'l-Mulk Abu Nasr al-Kunduri<sup>2</sup> who was the prime minister to Alp Arslan b. Chaghr Beg, the Seljuq, he ordered owing to his own meagre attainments that that precedent should be set aside and that communiques and warrants should be issued from the imperial departments in Persian.

Furthermore, they relate that the Amir 'Abdullah b. Tahir (828—844 A.D.), who was the governor of Khurasan during the Abbaside Caliphate, was one day at Nishapur when a man brought a book and offered it to him. "What may this book be?" said the Amir. "It is the Romance of 'Wamiq' and 'Adhra'—a pleasing tale, which was compiled by wise men and dedicated to King Nushirwan," replied the man. "We are," the Amir responded, "men who read the Qur'an and need but the Scripture and Traditions of the Prophet ; of such books as these we have no need. This book was, moreover, composed by Magians and is accursed in our eyes." The Amir then ordered that the book be cast into water and that wheresoever in his territories there be found any books of Magian authorship they should be burned. Therefore, till the advent of the Samanides Persian poems were not

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<sup>1</sup> See Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. II. p. 212 et seq. Also p. 184. This important work is generally known as the *Siyasat-Nama* or *the Treatise on the History and Art of Government*. There is an excellent European edition by the late M. Schefer.

<sup>2</sup> Minister to Tughril, the Seljuqian monarch, and brutally put to death (1064 A.D.) by Alp Arslan at Merv for his attachment to Sulayman, Alp Arslan's brother whose accession he desired. See Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. II. pp. 172—174.

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*to be found and even if from time to time Persian verses were composed they were not reduced to book form.*

They relate that Ya'qub b. Layth,<sup>1</sup> the Coppersmith, who was the first person to revolt in Persia against the Abbaside Caliphs had a boy-child of whom he was singularly fond. On 'Eid day, in company with other children, the boy was playing nuts<sup>2</sup> and the Amir, wishing to enjoy the child's play came to the hole and stayed on for a while. The boy cast the nuts; seven fell into the hole but one rolled out. The Amir's son became dejected. After a moment, however, owing to a recoil effect the nut began to roll towards the hole. The child became exultant and extemporised in a transport of glee

"Rolling, rolling, it goes to the hole."

The verse so charmed the Amir's (literary) taste that he sent for his courtiers and ministers and said, "This is an excellent verse. The boy is a poet born." Abu Dalf 'Ajali and Ibn al-K'ab devoted themselves to an analysis and investigation of it and found that it was a variety of Hazj.<sup>3</sup> By arranging the pauses, they indited similar verses and to this (particular) verse they added others like it and named (the two) a couplet. Thereafter, the people continued to compose couplets but the learned did not approve of this (arrangement). "It should consist of four verses," said they, "and be called a quatrain." Now, for some time, the scientists occupied themselves with the quatrain but as interest arose they attacked all aspects of the science of Rhetoric. Earth was its substance so it became dressed with verdure.

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<sup>1</sup> See the interesting account of Ya'qub b. Layth and Amr b. Layth in the *Siyasal-Nama*, ed. Schefer, pp. 11-17.

<sup>2</sup> I take it is something like playing marbles.

<sup>3</sup> On the Hazj metre, see *al-Mujam fi Maayiri Asharil-Ajam* by Shams-e-Qays, ed. Browne & Mirza Muhammad, p. 87.

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It was in the time of the Samanides that Persian poetry began to be popular as Rudagi was a perfect master of the poetical art. Previous to him, I have heard of none who was the author of an (entire) Persian 'diwan'. It is but proper that I should commence with him.

The *Lubabu'l-Albab* of Muhammad Awfi, composed about 1221—1222 A.D., distinctly recognises Bahram Gour as the first originator of Persian verse<sup>1</sup> but omits all particulars bearing upon the circumstances that inspired the first Persian composition, although the chapter is expressly written for this purpose. On the other hand, to the Arabic verses of this same king about a page is given—which incidentally serves to illustrate the method and style of the Lubab that not infrequently diverges from the main issue and ends irrelevently in a display of verbal jugglery.

Awfi next gives about ten lines of a Persian panegyric composed by one Abbas of Merv, on the occasion of the Caliph al-Ma'mun's visit to that city in 809 A.D. which M. Kazimirski and Prof. Browne have rejected as spurious and passes on to a consideration of royal versifiers and poets "not because they can be called poets but because the work may be honoured by being prefaced with their compositions."

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<sup>1</sup> See the *Lubabu'l-Albab* of Muhammad Awfi, ed. Browne and Mirza Muhammad, Part I. p. 19.

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Assuming tacitly that verse preceded prose in Persian it is obvious that in early Persian verse lies the clue to the birth of the language. Unfortunately, however, the earliest Persian verse whereof any records do remain is post-Muhammadan ; pre-Muhammadan Persian verse is known to be unknown. All that can therefore be conceded is that the Persian language of the 9th. century A.D. had more right to call itself Persian than it has had at any other time before or since. It was not Pahlawi ; it was not Arabic ; it was not a combination of the two. If anything at all, it was Persian. And this Persian, as invariably happens with a new language when it is newest, was natural and direct and consisted of few words and these again were chiefly of few syllables—seldom more than three. Thus Nidhami-i-'Arudi-i-Samarqandi discussing 'the nature of poetry and the utility of the skilful poet' gives two couplets of a Handhala of Badghis, a Saffaride poet,

مهنري گر بکام شیر در است      شو خطر کن ز کام شیر بجوي  
يا بزرگي و ناز و نعمت و جاه      يا چو مردان مرگ روياروي

If Lordship lies within the lion's jaws  
Go, risk it, and from those dread portals seize ;  
Such straight-confronting death as men desire  
Or riches, greatness, rank, and lasting ease."<sup>1</sup>

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Prof. Browne's translation.



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in which the many, monosyllabic or dissyllabic, indigenous words are, as it were, indices to the date of composition of the poem—like letters in a chronogram.

Dr. Nicholson, quoting from Sir Charles Lyall's introduction to his *Ancient Arabic Poetry*, says that

the first poets are already consummate masters of the craft .....The number and complexity of the measures which they use, their established laws of quantity and rhyme, and the uniform manner in which they introduce the subject of their poems all point to a long previous study and cultivation of the art of expression and the capacities of their language, a study of which no record now remains.

Likewise with Persian poetry. It is born an adult. The metre of the poems, with the exception of the quatrain and the couplet-poem is of exogenous origin being imported from the Arabs, but the language, even of the earliest poems, is so highly developed that no evasive appeal to a mal-preservation or destruction of the lingual record can be admitted to explain its adult birth. We are introduced to a language not in the process of making but already made, not crystallising but already crystallised into shape and a shape so definite that subsequent centuries have scarcely altered it to any appreciable extent. The Persian of that period continues to be the language of today.

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"I know too well that these arguments from probabilities are impostors and unless great caution is observed in the use of them they are apt to be deceptive." So Simmias observes to Socrates. And I am compelled to acknowledge, even at the cost of breaking the continuity of the argument, that the rest of the chapter is mere analogical reasoning and speculation broad-based on the treacherous data of Dawlatshah. The transformation of Pahlawi into Persian began at least two centuries before the Muhammadan conquest of Persia—Bahram Gour (420—438 A.D.), according to the testimony both of Dawlatshah and 'Awfi, is the author of the first Persian verse. Why, then, this abnormal gestation of Persian for four centuries more, after this foetal quickening? We may assume that the birth of the language was deliberately prevented to sustain the ascendancy of the House of Sasan, which had identified itself with Pahlawi and Zoroastrianism. The ingenious and successful attempts of Nushirwan to eliminate Mazdak and his followers, which received the unanimous support of the Magian clergy,<sup>2</sup> can be interpreted only in the light of protecting the state religion. Is it not feasible, then, although we

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<sup>1</sup> *Dialogues of Plato: Phaedo*. Translated by B. Jowett, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> Nidhamu'l-Mulk's *Siyasat-Nama*, pp. 165 *et seq.* Chapter 44.

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possess no authentic evidence, that the successors of Bahram Gour should have similarly retarded the transformation of the Pahlawi language from cogent political reasons?

Perhaps one direct result of this state control was to kill all residual interest in Pahlawi—thus defeating the very aims of the legislators. The study of the Arabic language now began to be included “amongst the accomplishments proper to a Sasanian prince”—Khurra-Khusraw, for example, the Persian satrap of Yemen about the time of the Prophet, had become so fully Arabicised that he recited Arabic poems and educated himself in the Arabic fashion—and the permeation of Arabic culture, a corollary of such study, to prepare Persia all the more for a new language and faith. The process of artificial respiration had succeeded ✓ in keeping Pahlawi alive for some time, but the language was, in fact, already dead before it received its *coup de grace* in the Caliphate of ‘Umar. Thence, for about two centuries, Arabic was thrust on Persia<sup>2</sup> as the written and the spoken language, so that this very Arabic, once read with avidity as a mark of culture, was now despised as an alien imposition.

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> “*ibid.*”, p. 27.

## *The Birth of the Persian Language.*

And all this time, Persia was trying to find a Persian language for herself. She had rejected Pahlawi; she now rejected Arabic—or rather, she had accepted Arabic to reject it. And when, on the decline of the Arab Caliphate of Baghdad, the desire for a national language became irrepressible, Pahlawi began to appear less odious than before—if Pahlawi was bad, the language of the foreign invader was worse. Conditions moreover had changed since Sasanian times—the state control of Pahlawi was gone and national interest in Pahlawi had arisen. The result was the transformation of Pahlawi and its enrichment with Arabic words, that is, the production of mature Persian. How this result was obtained may be left to Haug to explain.

“The explanation of this extraordinary compound writing, (written Pahlawi) fundamentally Semitic in its words and Iranian in its construction, is that it never literally represented the spoken language of any nation ..... The Persians of the eighth century did exactly as a Parsi priest would do at the present time; when they came to a Semitic word while reading Pahlavi, they pronounced its Persian equivalent, so that their reading was entirely Persian although the writing was an odd mixture of Semitic, Persian, and hybrid words. It was always optional to

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write the Persian word instead of its Semitic equivalent, and it was only necessary to make this the rule, instead of the exception, to convert ✓ the old Pahlavi into pure Persian. This final step became compulsory when the Persians adopted a new alphabet, with which the old Semitic ideograms would not amalgamate but which facilitated the adoption of Arabic terms introduced by their Mohammedan conquerors. Hence the sudden change from Pahlavi to modern / Persian was rather a change in writing than an alteration in speaking."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Haug's *Essays on the Parsis*, pp. 82—83.

# ***The Growth of Persian Poetry***



## *The Growth of Persian Poetry*

### I

THE growth of Persian poetry is in the main the growth of Persian thought. Almost every Persian thinker has been a poet—for example, Avicenna is a “poet-philosopher”; ‘Umar-i-Khayyam a “poet-astronomer”; Nasiru’d-Din Shah a “poet-king”.<sup>1</sup> And not only every recognised thinker, but I believe, every Persian is a poet of some sort. The growth of Persian poetry would involve therefore a study of the Persian people. This is interesting but it exceeds my limitations. “The Rise, and Fall of Persian verse during the Persian Renaissance, the Persian Ascendancy, and the Ghaznawide Decline” would be an appropriate though a cumbrous title.

Where poets are numerous the problem of selection presents itself at the very outset. Another difficulty arises because of the colouring of romance usually present in the literary productions of the East. The colour-effect may be happy but the

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Mortimer Durand once visited the late Shah Nasiru’d-Din to proffer a request from the ‘Umar-i-Khayyam club that the tomb of the poet should be repaired. The Shah was astonished and said, “Do you mean to tell me that there is a club connected with ‘Umar-i-Khayyam? Why, he has been dead for a thousand years. We have had a great many better poets in Persia than ‘Umar-i-Khayyam, and indeed I myself”—and then he stopped. Sykes’ *History of Persia*, Vol. II. p. 137.



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writings lose by this addition their historical value. Internal evidence, therefore, has to be admitted with caution : a compiled autobiography is not necessarily the most reliable biography. Few Eastern writers have under-estimated their talents; and self-descriptions especially by poets, if not false, are in the words of Kay-Kaus, Prince of Tabaristan, of a sort that require "a period of four months and the testimony of two hundred witnesses to prove them." An assiduously cultivated "art" of exaggeration, to which the Persian language, especially that of the Qasidas, lends itself, promotes self-praise almost unconsciously, and as this rises in successive verses for the sake of cumulative effect, the value of the literature must proportionately decrease. Admirer as I am of Minuchihri's poetry I can neither accept his claim to a knowledge of all sciences, nor his claim to be descended from the Royal House of Saman.

منم هر سخن را بیان معانی      منم جان و عقل و هنر را قوالب  
منم از نژاد بزرگان سامان      که بودند شاهان چتر و کواکب

I can explain the deepest thought in all sciences; I am the heart and soul of reason and knowledge.

I am descended from the Imperial House of Saman, whose kings bore the power and insignia of sovereignty.

To this, however, I shall return in another chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> *Minoutchehri*, ed. Kazimirski.

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Nidhami-i-'Arudi-i-Samarqandi ( d. 1161 A.D.) considers poetry as "the art which by acting on the imagination excites the faculties of anger and desire in such a way that by its suggestion men's temperaments become affected with exultation or depression, whereby it conduces to the accomplishment of great deeds in the order of the world"—

شاعري صناعتی است که ..... بایهام قوتهاي غضباني و شهوانی را  
بر انگیزد تا بدان ایهام طباع را انقباضی و انبساطی بود و امور  
عظام را در نظام عالم سبب شود،

a criticism which has the freshness of modern analysis and may be taken as representative of the views of his age. Handhala-i-Badghis, Rudagi, 'Unsuri, Farrukhi, Mu'izzi, Azraqi, Mas'ud-i-Sad-i-Salman, 'Amaq and Rashidi, Firdawsí and the author wrote poetry conforming with this ideal and anecdotes about them are to be found in the critical *Chahar-Maqala*. Lack of space has prevented Nidhami from discussing at length an additional number of poets whose "admirable verses and widely current poems have immortalised the Houses of Saman, Ghazna, Khaqan, Seljuq, Tabaristan, and Ghur", but he evidently accepts them as poets for he recommends them for study. Of these poets, eight belong to the Samanide period, twenty to the Ghaznawide, and twenty to the post-

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Ghaznawide. An uncritical anthology, 'Awfi's *Lubabu'l-Albab*, comprises twenty-eight poets from the Samanide period, twenty-eight from the Ghaznawide, and fifty from the period terminating with the poet Mu'izzi. I believe the consensus of opinion is in favour of recognising Nidhami as an able literary critic and my selection of him, therefore, is by no means arbitrary. The choice of the *Lubab* has been determined by considerations of its extreme antiquity. 'Awfi and Nidhami are not always in agreement. Nor are the data for the Samanide period quite trustworthy, and it is not improbable that some Samanide poets had been completely forgotten, themselves and their works, by the time of Nidhami, and could not, therefore, be discussed in the Second Discourse of his *Chahar-Maqala*. If so, the value of Samanide poetry would increase. But to err on the safe side I have refused the aid of speculation and based the following conclusions only on facts:

1. A rapid rise in the volume and merit of Persian verse during 850—950 A.D.
2. A remarkable increase in the merit of Persian verse during 950—1050 A.D.
3. And increase in output during 1050—1150 A.D.

After 1150 A.D. coarse and mediocre verse steadily inflated the volume of Persian poetry, so much so, that with notable exceptions—Sa'di, Hafiz, and others—the many poets of Persia may be said to have produced very little poetry.

## *The Growth of Persian Poetry*

Early Persian verse<sup>1</sup> exists only in fragments. Even as a spot can be a beauty-spot so a defect of incompleteness can be beautiful. Like Kubla Khan or Christabel, it is the peculiar beauty of this early verse that even its defects are beautiful.

Be that as it may, this early verse is unlike any other thing in Persian poetry: at once aqueous and igneous; aqueous, for it has the limpidity of celestial streams, igneous, for it has the heat Promethean.

The words used are ordinary, but they are employed with extraordinary effect. Combined with rich ideas which are independent of external controls—the so-called casts or “moulds”—they produce that freshness as of mountain air, and that freedom as of mountain torrents, which are the glory of early Persian verse. And as a torrent discovers its force in its own gradient and its own load even so does this verse find its impetus in its own impulse and its own spontaneity. There is no composing of verse; there is no writing of poetry. There is perception and emotion and impulse—and the words come forth.

This element of spontaneity, is not confined to a poet here or a poet there. It is an inaudible

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<sup>1</sup> Tahiride, Saffaride, and Samanide contributions.

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note to which the entire early Persian verse is attuned. Have these poets sung solely because they have been singers born ? Or is their wild carol the product of the buoyancy and laughter of a nation that had newly found its tongue after the enforced aphasia of centuries ? For although the foreign language during its regime of two or three centuries did not produce sterility or even stagnation in Persia's intellectual life, and Arabic books written by Persian scholars constituted a great or even the best part of Arabic culture', nevertheless the soul or the genius of the nation was not revealed till after its lingual emancipation. Rudagi, for example, was not produced, and perhaps could not have been produced, by Arabian Persia.

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<sup>1</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 204.

## *The Growth of Persian Poetry*

### II

Though it appear paradoxical, Persia of the Persian Renaissance (850-950 A.D.) is distinctly more Arabian than the contemporary neighbouring Arabia. She speaks her own Persian tongue, it is true, and obeys her own Persian master but the master lives the pagan Arab's life and the tongue speaks the pagan Arab's thought. Like causes are known to produce like effects and the resumption of political liberty and the proud assumption of a native language have concurred in reproducing the Bedouin social and intellectual outlook. The identical development of nations, indeed, is not necessarily prevented through international diversity.

Dr. Nicholson has said, I believe, the last word on the pagan Arab, and said it so well that his chapter on pre-Islamic Poetry, Manners and Religion<sup>1</sup> is interesting alike to the novice and the specialist. "When there appeared a poet in a family of the Arabs," he quotes from Ibn Rashiq, "the other tribes round about would gather together to that family and wish them joy of their good luck, for a poet was a defence to the honour of them all, a weapon to ward off insult from their good name, and a means of perpetuating their glorious deeds and of

<sup>1</sup> Nicholson's *Lit. Hist. of the Arabs*, Chapter III.

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establishing their fame for ever"—to which he adds that "the pagan Shair is the oracle of his tribe, their guide in peace and their champion in war. It was to him they turned for counsel when they sought new pastures, and only at his word would they pitch or strike their houses of hair." "The powers of the Shair, however, were chiefly exhibited in Satire which, in the oldest known form, introduces and accompanies the tribal feud, and is an element of war just as important as the actual fighting... The menaces which the poet hurled against the foe were believed to be inevitably fatal. His rhymes had all the effect of a solemn curse, spoken by a divinely inspired prophet or priest." Evidently then, there was little division of labour in pagan Arabia : the Arab poet had to bear much of the burden of the state.<sup>1</sup> That he did do so, and often successfully, shows that he must have been a Bedouin *par excellence*—an incarnation of honour and valour and revenge ; a darling in the tent and a terror in the waste.

In early Persia a similar state of affairs prevailed—though on a smaller scale. The first indepen-

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<sup>1</sup> Figuratively speaking—for a "state" as we understand it was unknown in early Arabia. "The momentary junction of several tribes produces an army ; their more lasting union constitutes a nation." See Gibbon's interesting account of early Arabia in the 5th. Volume of his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

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dent Persian House, that of the Saffarides, possessed features strangely suggestive of pre-Islamic Arabia: Ya'qub b. Layth, for example, is a typical Arab hero. "When after his defeat by the troops of Caliph al-Mu'tamid", says Prof. Browne, "on the occasion of his persistent attempt to enter Baghdad, he lay dying of colic, the Caliph, still fearing him, sent him a conciliatory letter, wherein, still reproaching him for his disobedience, he held out conditional promises of forgiveness and compensation."

چون یعقوب نامه خلیفه بر خواند هیچگونه دلش نرم نشد و بر آن کار پشیمانی نخورد و بفرمود تا تره و ماهی و پیازی چند بر طبق جوین نهاده پیش آوردند — آنکه بفرمود تا رسول خلیفه را در آوردند و بنشانند — پس روی روی رسول کرد و گفت « برو و خلیفه را بگوئی که من مردی روبین گر زاده ام و از پدر روبین گری آموخته ام و خوردن من نان جوین و ماهی و تره و پیاز بوده است — این پادشاهی و آلات و گنج و خواسته از مرغیاری و شیر مردی بدست آورده ام نه از پدر میراث دارم و نه از تو یافته ام — از پای نشینم تا سر تو بمیدیه نفرستم و خاندان تو ویران نکنم — تا اینک گفتم بکنم یا بسر نان جوین و ماهی و تره باز شوم — و اینک گنجها را در باز کردم و لشکرها باز خواندم و بر اثر این پیغام آمدم »<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Nidhamu'l-Mulk's *Siyasat-Nama*, Chapter III. pp. 13-14.



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When Ya'qub had read the Caliph's letter his heart was in no way softened, neither did he experience any remorse for his action ; but he bade them put some cress and fish and a few onions on a wooden platter and set them before him. Then he bade them introduce the Caliph's ambassador, and caused him to be seated. Then he turned his face to the ambassador and said, "Go, tell the Caliph that I am the son of a coppersmith and learned from my father, the coppersmith's craft. My food has been barley bread, fish, cress, and onions. The dominion and gear and treasure and goods I won by cunning and courage ; I neither inherited them from my father nor received them from thee. I will not rest until I send thy head to Mahdiyya and destroy thy House. I will either do this which I say, or I will return to my barley bread and fish and cress. Behold, I have opened the doors of my treasure-houses, and have again called out my troops and I come on the heels of this message. <sup>4</sup>

"The genuineness of this speech is disproved by an anachronism for Mahdiyya, the first capital of the Fatimid Caliphs was not founded for more than 30 years after Ya'qub's death," but allowing for this, one sees in Ya'qub the pagan Arab re-born with the traditional Bedouin virtues and defects. Generalisations can hardly be based on isolated instances but even so it appears to me that Saffaride Persia was rather a haunt of Persian Bedouins than a cradle of Persian culture.

What was the *role* of the poet in this period ? He must have borne some resemblance to the

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<sup>1</sup> Nidhamu'l-Mulk's *Siyasal-Nama*, Chapter. III. pp. 13—14.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

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Arab poet, otherwise he could not hope to secure the patronage of princes like Ya'qub. The relationship of cause and effect should rather be reversed—the patron did not stamp his impress upon the poet, it was the poet that moulded his patron. Ya'qub, for example, was originally a donkey-boy; a single quatrain of the poet Handhala changed him so completely that he became the master of Khurasan. Even so, the status of the Saffaride poet was never so exalted as that of the Arabian—the Samanide poet occupied a still more humble position. Rudagi's song—

بوي جوي موليان آيد همي	ياد يار مهربان آيد همي
ريگ آمو با درشتيهـ اي او	زير پايم پرنيسان آيد همي
آب جيمون از نشاط روي دوست	خنك مارا تا ميان آيد همي
اي بخارا شاد باش و دير زي	ميرزي تو شادمان آيد همي
مير ماه است و بخارا آسمان	ماه سوي آسمان آيد همي
مير مروت و بخارا بوستان	سروسوي بوستان آيد همي

The Jú-yi-Múliyán we call to mind,  
We long for those dear friends long left behind.  
The sands of Oxus, toilsome though they be,  
Beneath my feet were soft as silk to me.  
Glad at the friend's return, the Oxus deep,  
Up to our girths in laughing waves shall leap.  
Long live Bukhárá ! Be thou of good cheer !  
Joyous towards thee hasteth our Amír !

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The Moon's the Prince, Bukhárá is the sky;  
O sky, the Moon shall light thee by and by !  
Bukhárá is the mead, the Cypress he;  
Receive at last, O mead, thy Cypress-tree! <sup>1</sup>

—may have hypnotised the Amir Nasr b. Ahmed into riding out of Herat without his riding-boots, and riding into Bukhara without drawing rein anywhere, but none the less the poet was only a paid servant of the Amir and not his counsellor or his equal, much less his superior. Freedom of speech was opposed to Persian culture and court etiquette and Rudagi, lavish in his praise of Bukhara, dared not speak disparagingly of Herat or ignore the wishes of the king. Arab poetry soars at a loftier height, because it is independent of the approval or disapproval of kings.

The transition from Arab simplicity to Persian luxury was apparently gradual, for there remains in Rudagi's *ghazal* an echo of Bedouin poetry. The Ju-yi-Mulian is still the first thought of the poet and the Oxus' sands are as yet "soft as silk." And in this cry for the river and the river's sands that rises from the royal pavilion at Herat, is there not to be heard the distant wail of Meisun "pining amid the courtly luxuries of Damascus for the freedom of the desert?"

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

## The Growth of Persian Poetry

لَبَيْتُ مَخْنُقُ الْأَرْوَاحِ دُونِي وَبِكُرْبٍ يَتَّبِعُ الْأَظْمَانُ صَعْبُ وَأَصْوَاتُ الرِّيحِ بِكُلِّ فَجٍّ وَأَكْلُ كَسِيرَةٍ فِي كَسْرِ بَيْتِي وَخَرَقٌ مِنْ بَنِي عَمِّي نَحِيفٌ فَمَا أَتَنِي سَوْيَا وَطَنِي بَدِيلًا	أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ كَهْزِرِ مُنْبِفِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ بَغْلٍ زَفُوفِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ نَقَرِ الْغُفُوفِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ أَكْلِ الرَّغِيفِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ عَلِجٍ عَليْفِ فَخَيِّ ذَاكَ مِنْ وَطَنٍ مُشْرِيفِ
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The tent fanned by desert breeze is dearer to me than these lofty towers.

I shall ride more joyously on the young camel than on the richly caparisoned steed.<sup>1</sup>

The wild blast over the sandy plain is sweeter far to me than the flourish of royal trumpets.

A crust in the shade of the Bedawi tent hath better relish than these courtly viands.

The noble Arab of my tribe is more comely in my sight than the obese and bearded men around me.

O that I were once again in my desert home ! I would not exchange it for all these gorgeous halls.<sup>2</sup>

There is imperishable beauty in the description of the Oxus leaping and laughing to greet the soldiers' return

آب جیون از نشاط روی دوست      خنک ما را نامیان آید همی

<sup>1</sup> Literally : 'prancing mule'.

<sup>2</sup> Muir's translation. See his *Caliphate, its Rise, Decline and Fall*, p. 304.

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Glad at the friend's return, the Oxus deep  
Up to our girths in laughing waves shall leap.

—for the verse is at once a complete projection of emotion into words and a direct communication of emotion without the encumbrance of words. Our response to the verse is instantaneous—as our response to a live wire, as the river's response to the returning army. And, being instantaneous, it is an index of the poet's own surrender to his own emotions—all the more remarkable because Rudagi had been promised a reward by the officers of the army, if he could successfully persuade the Amir to return, and had, therefore, written the *ghazal* to order. But there is no strain or tension in the poem : the emotions are as genuine as their expression is natural. Can it be that the incendiary was himself burnt by carrying fire in his own bosom ?

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### III

After Rudagi Persian poetry begins to be Persian. Accustomed as Persia had been to war-elephants and scythed chariots, the clash of innumerable hosts, the barrel-crown and dome of the Chosroes, and artificial paradises "in which all was almost beaten gold, chairs, stools, thrones, tabernacles, and pillars of gold, plane-trees and vines of gold, grapes of precious stones, all the other ornaments of pure gold,

'Fulget gemma floris, et jaspide fulva supellex  
Strata micant Tyrio.' <sup>1</sup>

the tent, the camel, the palm, and the pasture-ground could not be objects to stimulate national talent and no sooner had Persian ascendancy been unquestionably established than the mental current began to flow again in the old abandoned beds. Freedom of action and speech were willingly sacrificed to uphold, or rather reintroduce, Persian customs and traditions, and poets sighed no more for the Oxus' sands but for minted gold. A political and intellectual atavism asserted itself, which reduced the poet. "to the functions proper

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<sup>1</sup> Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Vol. II. p. 176.

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to the journalist in modern times as well as the more intimate duties of the boon-companion and sycophant. The Court-poet frankly wanted and wrote for money. 'If thou wilt give me a thousandth part of what Rudagi obtained from the bounty of kings, I will produce poetry a thousand times as good,' said Shaykh Abu Zarra'a al-Ma'mari of Gurgan to his patron. The poet was expected to show himself equal to every occasion, whether of joy or of grief; to congratulate the royal eye which first detected the new moon heralding the conclusion of the month of fasting or to console for a fall from a restive horse, or a bad throw at backgammon, or even a defeat in the field of battle, even to offer condolence to a friend afflicted with toothache."<sup>1</sup>

Even Nidhami-i-Arudi-i-Samarqandi, to whose literary criticism I have repeatedly paid tribute, can hardly take a detached view of poetry, and his preamble on the Poetic Art is a discussion of poetry in terms of both material and intellectual profit. He combines, therefore, the Persian attitude towards, poetry with the Arabian, but his shrewd successors, more removed from Arabian influences, were not slow to reject the mental advantage in favour of the material.

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<sup>1</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. II. p. 373.

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Nidhami's presentment of Poetry as a marketable commodity is rather delicate. The ware is first discussed, next the buyer, then the seller. And the buyer is made rich, the seller poor, and the ware aesthetic and immortal. What can be a more equitable bargain than the exchange of wealth for immortality? None evidently. Therefore, the buyer buys and the seller sells—the poet becomes a poet-laureate and the king a God.

Poetry thus becomes a Life and Death problem. The king dies and all is over—unless he has patronised poetic talent, for verse is a *sine qua non* to immortality.

بسا کاخا که محمودش بنا کرد      که از رفعت همی بامه مرا کرد  
نه بینی ز آن همه يك خشت بر پای      مدح عنصري ماندست بر جای

How many a palace did great Mahmud raise  
At whose tall towers, the Moon did stand at gaze  
Whereof one brick remaineth not in place,  
Though still re-echo Unsuri's sweet lays.<sup>1</sup>

And the poet dies and his talents perish—unless he has learnt to expose them properly so that they catch the royal eye. This trade-technique is the main thing—the wares have not only to be exhibited but they are to be exhibited only according to the royal fancy. Al-Biruni, for example, preferred his

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.



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own judgment and for two correct but displeasing forecasts went to the Ghazna prison.<sup>1</sup> For as Mahmud said to Hasan-i-Maymandi, who was interceding for al-Biruni, "Kings are like little children; in order to receive rewards from them, one should speak in accordance with their opinion."<sup>2</sup>

محمود گفت خواجه بداند که پادشاهان چون کودکان خورد  
باشند — سخن بر وفق رای ایشان باید گفت تا از ایشان بهره مند  
باشند ،

Mahmud said to the minister : "Know that kings are like little children ; in order to receive rewards from them, one should speak in accordance with their opinion."

Still more deplorable, because of its latent perversity and the precedent introduced, is an another remark of Mahmud's :

(محمود) گفت یا بو ریحان اگر خواهی که از من برخوردار باشی  
سخن بر مراد من گوی نه بر سلطنت علم خویش — بو ریحان از  
آن پس سیرت بگردانید ،

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<sup>1</sup> Nidhami-i-Arudi-i-Samarqandi's *Chahar-Maqala*, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Baihaqi says that the poet Mas'udi for venturing to draw Sultan Mas'ud's attention in a *qasida* to the rising power of the Seljuqs was exiled to India.

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Saïd Mahmud: "If thou desirest always to reap advantage from me, speak according to my desire, not according to the dictates of thy science." So, thereafter, Abu Rayhan altered his practice.<sup>1</sup>

This royal advice was to become the unalterable law of the land, sanctioned alike by the critic,

در حق و باطل با او (پادشاه) باید بود و بر وفق رای او  
تقریر باید کرد<sup>2</sup>

One must be with kings in right and wrong, and speak according to their wish.<sup>3</sup>

and the moralist,

اگر خود روز را گوید شبست این  
بیاید گفت اینک ماه و پروین<sup>4</sup>

Should he (the king) say : "The night is day,"

Reply : "Behold the moon and the Pleiades."

According to Nidhami, it is necessary for a poet to be born a poet, to have Prosody at his finger-tips, to know 20,000 choice couplets of the Ancients and 10,000 select verses of the Moderns from memory, before he can be judged worthy of serving the king. This huge Olympus of learning, then, was to be raised up in order that the king

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

<sup>2</sup> Nidhami-i-Arudi-i-Samarqandi's *Chahar-Maqala*, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

<sup>4</sup> See the *Gulistan* of Sa'di, Chapter I. Anecdote 32.

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might be kept in good humour—a task that only a Persian could do, a task that only a Persian could demand. There was the slave of caprice insisting that his wrong be represented as right, and there was the slave of money willing to sacrifice science to sycophancy.

انوری در مدرسه منصوریه طوس بتحصیل علوم مشغول می بود -  
همچنانکه رسم است فلاکت و افلاس موالی بدو عاید شد و  
بمخرج الیوم فرو ماند - در اثناى این حال موبک سنجرى بنواحى  
رادکان نزول کرد و انوری برد - مدرسه نشسته بود - دید که  
مردى محشم با اسب و غلام و ساز تمام گذرد - پرسید که این کیست -  
گفتند مردى شاعر است - انوری گفت - سبحان الله پایه علم من  
بدین بلندی و من چنین مفلوک و شیوه شاعری بدین پستی - او چنین  
محشم - بعزت و جلال ذوالجلال که من بعد الیوم به شاعری که  
دون مراتب من است مشغول خواهم شد ،

Anwari was studying at the Mansuriyya College of Tus, and, as is common with students, poverty and indigence kept him company, so much so that he could not meet his daily expenses. Meanwhile, Sultan Sanjar with his retinue alighted in the environs of Radekan. (One day) Anwari was sitting at the door of his college, when he saw a nobleman pass by on his horse with his suite and (a display of) pomp and ceremony. "Who is he?" he inquired. "He is a poet," they answered. "Good Heavens!" exclaimed Anwari, "am I so poor when the rank of Science is

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so high and is he so rich when the grade of Poetry stands so low? By the glory and splendour of the Lord of Glory, from today onwards, I will busy myself with poetry which is the lowest of my accomplishments.<sup>1</sup>

Anwari is considered one of the greatest of Persian poets,

در شعره تن پیمبران اند هر چند که لانی بعدی  
ایات و قصیده و غزل را فردوسی و انوری و سعدی

The sphere poetic hath its prophets three  
(Although 'there is no prophet after me')  
Firdawsi in the epic, in the ode  
Sa'di, and in *qasida* Anwari.<sup>2</sup>

and, as it were, in spite of himself, for he considers poetry as the lowest of his accomplishments. This almost amounts to a denial of poetry by its own advocate. Obviously, therefore, poetry had ceased to be inspiring. The "arrows" of the Arab warrior<sup>3</sup> had become the "pearls" of the Persian courtier<sup>4</sup>: what was once a living subject had become the means of gaining an easy living. Truth was penalised by Mahmud, and, when even science was falsified to please the royal whim, what may not

<sup>1</sup> The latter half of the translation is Prof. Browne's.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

<sup>3</sup> The rhymes of the Arab poet were often compared to arrows. See R. A. Nicholson's *Lit. Hist. of the Arabs*, p. 73.

<sup>4</sup> Persian poets call themselves jewellers, who "thread pearls" *i. e.* indite verses.

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Poetry have suffered ? Falsehood was encouraged by king and critic, and poet-beggars were entertained by the state—hence a corruption of Persia's morals and a dwarfing of her intellectual powers, and a reversal of the fair opinion held of her by Herodotus when he says : “The Persians are taught more especially to ride, to draw the bow, and to speak the truth.”

*The Rise of the House of Ghazna——with a  
digression on Critics and Persian Literature.*



## *The Rise of the House of Ghazna*

### I

WE may now consider the House of Ghazna as it rose from its humble origin to the crest of its glory under Mahmud, and then as it dwindled down under Mas'ud almost to oblivion. In order to view the picture in its clearest perspective, it is necessary to trace the course of events up to the extinction of the dynasty, but Muhammadan dynasties, much as they may have differed from one another in their origin and growth, show such slight variations in their decay that an omission of the successors of Mas'ud from our survey may not only be justifiable but desirable.

Noteworthy are certain features of peculiar interest. The Ghaznawide House whilst associated with the climax of Persian nationalism is not the cause of it. No other dynasty is at once so nationalistic and alien ; no other dynasty so representative and yet so unrepresentative of Persian thought and character.

Persia has always welcomed the doctrine of hereditary monarchy. The Achæmenian and more so the Sasanian monarchs ruled in virtue of a divine right that was tacitly assumed to be inalienably vested in their family. Hence the Buwayhids claimed descent from the Sasanians—



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not merely for the sake of glory but to win popular opinion which they knew inclined to the principle of hereditary succession.

The Ghaznawides could have advanced no such fictitious claim, for the founder of the House, Alptigin, was a recognised slave of the Samanides and Subuktigin, who eventually succeeded him, was likewise but a slave. That a slave dynasty could ever be established in Persia in the teeth of both sentiment and tradition is in itself surprising. Nothing but the virility, the unusual clemency, and the military genius of the earlier Ghaznawides could have rendered it possible. But as the kingdom of Ghazna rapidly expanded, it became obvious that a slave dynasty lacked the driving power necessary for its maintenance, and the genius of Mahmud had to meet the want by striking a new note in foreign policy—war against idolatry; and forthwith the current of public opinion was deflected into channels which, for Persia, were strange and novel. To the same cause—the desire to camouflage his ignoble birth in a land where royal birth was the all-powerful factor—is due the persistence with which Mahmud sought recognition and titles from the Caliph at Baghdad. Why should he have done so, being himself the *de facto* sovereign of the Caliphate? The reason is

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obvious. The Caliph, though he had little else, had the noblest blood in his veins, and Mahmud, if he lacked anything at all, lacked noble blood. Each was complementary to the other; hence a partnership on which all eyes were focussed. And thus, by a brilliant manœuvre, Mahmud achieved what he coveted, a diversion of popular attention from himself to his actions.

As the allegiance to Baghdad was only a blind, it became necessary for Mahmud to play the adroit impostor. He did so with consummate skill. His iconoclastic zeal was ostensibly to advance the cause of Islam. It did that. But it also brought him an enormous revenue, and what was even more important, such an excellent reputation that his slave ancestry was forgotten. Eliminate the anxiety of Mahmud to draw attention off his birth, and all his actions are anomalous. Mahmud, an Arab *par excellence* in his hatred of idolatry, in his attachment and allegiance to the Arab Caliphate of Baghdad, is not easily recognisable as the patron of Firdawsi, who ends his great *Shah-Nama* with the fall of the Sasanian monarchy, and has naught but caustic invective for the Arab 'barbarians' who overran his country.

ز شیر شتر خوردن و سوسمار      عرب را بجای رسیده است کار  
که تاج کیان را کند آرزوی      تقو باد بر چرخ گردون تقوی

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From feeding on camels' milk and desert lizards, so have the  
affairs of the Arabs prospered

That they now covet the throne of the Chosroes. Shame on  
thee, O circling Heavens, shame !

The Persian had hitherto played no part, not even a subsidiary part, in the propagation of Islam ; why should the revival of Persian nationalism then be the signal for the renewal of *jihad*—the conversion of Hindus to Islam by the slaughter of recusants ? Mahmud, the Khalid of the plains of India, is not exactly the counterpart of the lover of Ayaz whose shorn tresses are the cause of such disconsolation that none dare enter the royal presence. Nor is the orthodox Mahmud, who, refusing to associate pilgrimage with a military expedition, returns from Khurasan to Ghazna and then proceeds to Khurasan that his journey may disinterestedly be dedicated to the holy task, to be easily identified in the hardened drunkard who can drink while there is still wine in Ghazna. Can we not see the true coin and the counterfeit ? The true<sup>1</sup> Persian and the assumed Arab ?

<sup>1</sup> *i. e.* in feelings and sympathy.

THE writers on the Ghaznawide period are many, but they have borrowed so much from one another—plagiarism is unfortunately not confined to history; it stalks unmasked throughout Oriental literature—that to quote one is to quote all. Here, in parallel columns, are two passages from *Firishita* and *Rawdatu's-Safa*.

*Rawdatu's-Safa*<sup>2</sup>

*Tarikh-i-Firishita*<sup>1</sup>

ایلك خان ماوراالنهر را در حصوزه تصرف آورده .....  
 فتحنامه سلطان محمود فرستاده او را به وراثت ملك  
 خراسان نهیت گفت و میان هر دو پادشاه  
 بساط مصافحت مسموم یافت و سلطان  
 ابوالطیب سهل ابن سلیمان صلوكی را كه امام حدیث بود  
 برسم رسالت نزد ایلك خان فرستاد بخطبه كریه از  
 كرام او رغبت نموده و بیش از حد و حصر از شفتهای زر  
 و یاقوت قیمتی و عقاید در و سرزبان و تحتها جامه و  
 یسهای عنبر و اوانی سم و زر مشعون بمشومات كالور

و ایلك خان ماوراالنهر را یکباره از آل سامان مستخلص گردانید و  
 فتحنامه سلطان محمود فرستاده او را به استیلاي مملکت  
 خراسان نهیت گفت — بنابراین میان هر دو پادشاه  
 بنای دوستی و یگانگی استحکام تمام پذیرفت و سلطان محمود نیز  
 ابوالطیب سهل بن سلیمان صلوكی را كه از ایه اهل حدیث بود  
 برسم رسالت پیش ایلك خان فرستاد بخطبه كریه از  
 كرام او رغبت نمود و بیش از حد و نهایت غفایس  
 از یاقوت و لمهای قیمتی و عقاید در و سرزبان و سرجان  
 و یسهای عنبر و اوانی سم و زر مشعون بمشومات كالور

<sup>2</sup> Vol. IV. p. 734.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I. pp. 23-24.

و دیگر نبرکان هند و درختای هود و ششبرهای آبدار و  
 پهلان جنگی آراسه بلباس و مناطق مرصع که  
 چشم بیننده از لطافت آن خیره میگشت و اسپان راهوار  
 با زین و سرامبرهای زرین مصحوب او گردانید  
 و امام ابوالطیب سهل چون بیدار ترکستان رسید  
 اهالی آن دیار در تعظیم و تبعیل او غایت مبالغه بجای آوردند  
 و امام ابوالطیب در اوزکند تا از زمان توقف نمود که اسرار مواصلت  
 با غلام رسید و در یتیمی که از برای تحصیل آن در دریا ترکستان  
 غواصی نموده بود بدست آورده با غلباس و خراباب آن ولایت  
 از زر خالص و سیم ناب و کبیرکان خطای و ماهرویان ختنی و  
 قائم و سمور و اصناف نبرکان دیگر مقتضی الزام بازگشته  
 بمحمدت سلطان محمود پیوست و مدتهای مدید میان سلطان و اینک خان  
 دوستی و یگانگی مهاد بود تا آنکه به چشم زخم ایام و سیاحت غلام  
 مشارع مودت مکدر شده هجرت به عداوت مبدل گشت

و دیگر نبرکان دیار هند از درخت هود و تنهای آبدار و  
 پهلان جنگی آراسه بلباس و مناطق مرصع که  
 چشم بیننده از لطافت آن خیره میشد و اسپان نامدار  
 با زین و سرامبر زر مصحوب او گردانید  
 و چون امام ابوالطیب بیدار ترک رسید  
 در تعظیم و تبعیل او غایت مبالغه بجای آوردند  
 و ابوالطیب در اوزکند اقامت نمود تا اسرار مواصلت  
 با غلام رسید و در یتیمی که در تحصیل آن در دریا ترکستان  
 غواصی میکرد و غلباس و خراباب آن ولایت  
 از زر خالص و سیم ناب و کبیرکان خطای و ماهرویان چینی و  
 قائم و سمور و انواع نبرکان دیگر مقتضی الزام بازگشته  
 بمحمدت سلطان محمود پیوست و مدتهای مدید میان سلطان و اینک خان  
 بساط مصادقت مهاد بود تا به چشم زخمی ایام و سیاحت غلام بدنام  
 مشارع آن مودت مکدر شد و آن هجرت به عداوت متغیی گشت

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<sup>1</sup>And Ilak Khan completely liberated Transoxiana from the sway of the Samanides, and despatched to Sultan Mahmud the news of victory, and congratulated him on the conquest of the kingdom of Khurasan. Therefore, between the two kings, the foundation of friendship and unanimity was securely laid, and Sultan Mahmud sent Abu't-Tayyib Sahl b. Sulaiman-i-Sa'luki, who was one of the leaders of the followers of Tradition<sup>2</sup> as an ambassador to Ilak Khan, and expressed his desire to marry one of Ilak Khan's daughters. Moreover, he despatched in his company things of great value, beyond all reckoning or compare; for example, rubies, rare and precious, and necklaces of pearls and corals, and eggs of amber, and utensils of gold and silver, laden with camphor and other perfumes and rarities from India, and aloeswood, and swords of excellent temper, and elephants-of-war, adorned with trappings and jewelled belts, so that the eyes of the beholder blinked with their lustre and brilliance, and noble steeds and rich saddles and golden bridles. And when Imam Abu't-Tayyib Sahl reached the land of Turkistan, the people there showed the highest extravagance in honouring and extolling him. And Imam Abu't-Tayyib remained in Uzkand till his mission of effecting an alliance (between the two sovereigns) was completed. And having obtained that valuable pearl, to secure which he had dived in the waters of Turkistan, as also other rarities and unique valuables of that country, for example, the purest gold and silver, and slave-girls of Cathay, and moon-faced damsels of Khutan, and ermine and sable, and various other rare gifts, and having gained his object completely, he returned to the service of Sultan Mahmud. And for a long time, between Sultan Mahmud and Ilak Khan, friendship and unanimity was strongly maintained till the malicious eye of the times and continual intriguing made the pools of that friendship turbid and love changed to enmity.

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<sup>1</sup> As the two texts are almost identical, I have only translated the *Tarikh-i-Firishla*.

<sup>2</sup> "As opposed to 'the followers of Opinion' (*ahl-i-ra'y*)."

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Words, words, words. And yet more words.  
Empty as air and hollow as the friendship of kings.

Those who have had to search a *debris* of exaggeration, and word-jingle like this for some buried fact, will easily grant, in the words of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, that they have been wasting their time on mere jargon—neither Persian nor Pushtu, prose nor verse, but merely a flux of words to the pen.

This, however, is a defect, not of Oriental literature in general, but as has been pointed out by Prof. Browne, only of literature produced at certain epochs—for example, Timuride literature. This was brought into India by the Mughals—to remain with the tenacity of a cactus and to spread with the celerity of a runner. The British conquest of India introduced this florid literature to Europe, hence the prevalent opinion that "Oriental literature is a kind of ornamentation laid on to tickle the taste, a study for the dilettante, beneath the notice of.....stern and masculine minds."<sup>1</sup> Newman states this. Sir Arthur endorses it. And both are supremely happy. For have they not studied the true East *in situ*—from the cliffs of Dover?

"The man of words," continues Sir Arthur, "duly instructed, dips the pen of desire in the

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, *The Art of Writing*, p. 31. *et seq.*

ink of devotedness and proceeds to spread it over the page of desolation. Then the nightingale of affection is heard to warble to the rose of loveliness, while the breeze of anxiety plays around the brow of expectation. This is what the Easterns are said to consider fine writing."<sup>1</sup>

In the *Safar-Nama* of Nasir-i-Khusraw, the *Qabus-Nama* of Kay-kà'ûs, the *Siyasat-Nama* of Nidhamu'l-Mulk—to quote offhand from the literature of the Early Seljuq Period—there is neither the amorous descant of “the nightingale of affection,” nor the lachrymal stream of the crocodile. Not *all* strata of Persian literature are crammed with fossil nightingales and roses. Let us expose a few beds of Sa'di.

موسیٰ علیہ السلام قارون را نصیحت کرد که احسن کا احسن  
الله البک - نشنید - عاقبتش شنیدی -

Moses, on whom be peace, advised Cræsus, saying, “Do good, even as God hath done to thee.” He heard not, and you have heard what happened to him.

هاتمی را پرسیدند نیک بخت کیست و بد بخت چیست ؟ گفت  
نیک بخت آنکه خورد و گشت و بد بخت آنکه مرد و هشت

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<sup>1</sup> How can they do so, when the *Qur'an*, which they hold as the model of their art of writing, is not ornate? The *Qur'an* is indeed so finely written that it advances its inimitability as a proof of its divinity. “Produce a chapter like it and call on your helpers besides Allah, if you are truthful.” *Qur'an*, II. 23.



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They asked of a wise man: "Who is the man of good fortune and who of bad?" Said he: "The man of good fortune is he who ate and tilled; the man of bad fortune is he who died and left (everything he had).

شبی در بیابان مکه از بیهوایی پای رفتن بماند — مر بنهادم و شتریان  
را گفتم از دست من بدار

بای مسکین پیاده چند رود کز تحمل -توه شد بخنی  
تا شود جسم فربهی لاغر لاغری مرده باشد از مخنی  
گفت ای برادر حرم در پیش است و حرامی از پس — اگر رفتی  
بردی و اگر خفتی مردی — نشنیده که گفته اند

خوشت زیر مغیلان براه بادیه خفت  
شبی رحیل ولی ترک جان بیاید گفت

One night in the desert of Mecca, I could travel no more through insomnia; I gave up the effort and said to the camel-driver, "Leave me."

How long shall the feet of the poor wayfarer take him, when even the Bactrian camel is weary?

By the time the fat man has become lean, the lean shall have died of hardship.

Said he: "O brother, the noble sanctuary is before us, and the ignoble follow behind. If thou goest, thou winnest; if thou sleepest, thou diest."

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It is sweet to sleep on the night of the journey by the desert-side among Arabian thorns, but it is necessary to bid farewell to life.

سوال کردم و گفتم جمال روی تو  
چه شد که مورچه بر گرد ماه جوشیدست  
جواب داد که ندانم چه بود ردم را  
مگر باتم حسنم سیاه پوشیدست

I asked him : "What has happened to the beauty of thy face, for the ( black ) down has settled round ( the disc of ) the moon ?"

Said he : "I do not know what has happened to my face but it may have put on black in mourning for my beauty."

We find we have struck a hidden spring, pure and clear, living, healthful. But we will go a step further.

"The enamoured one," says Sir Arthur, "cannot write a sentence himself. He is the specialist in passion for the moment but thought and words are two things to him, and for words he must go to another specialist, the professional letter-writer. Thus there is a division of labour."

The Persian lover may not be loquacious. He may even be tongue-tied, as he himself confesses.

گریبای دهمت جان ورنه آئی کشدم غم  
من که بایست بمیرم چه بیای چه نیای

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گفته بودم چو بیای غم دل با تو بگویم  
چه بگویم که غم از دل برود چون تو بیای

If thou come, I'll yield thee my life, and if thou come not  
I'll die of grief. Oh, then I must die, whether thou come  
or do not come.

I had said : "When thou'lt come I shall tell thee my heart's  
ache." What now shall I say ?—for grief doth go from my  
heart when thou dost come."

But is not this the silence that is more eloquent  
than speech?

In Persian—and, perhaps, also in other  
languages—the good and the bad, the beautiful  
and the ugly are intermingled. There is much  
that is false, foggy, florid, but much which is not  
so ; it stands apart from all colour and ornament-  
ation in a class by itself, unspeakably beautiful, a  
thing "to dream of, not to tell."

Was it a Persian gendarmerie that Newman  
engaged and routed? Or the Shah's *corps d'élite*?  
Or the "Immortals" <sup>1</sup> of the Great King? But  
these are not questions to be asked in the great  
hall at Cambridge where Newman is being honoured  
by Sir Arthur.

"I quoted Newman playfully a moment ago.

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<sup>1</sup> Sykes's *History of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 275.

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I am going to quote him in *strong earnest*.<sup>1</sup> And here let me say that of all the books written in these hundred years, there is perhaps none you can more profitably thumb and ponder than ..... *The Idea of a University* ..... Now you will find much pretty swordsmanship in its pages, but nothing more trenchant than the passage in which Newman assails and puts to rout the Persian host of infidels—I regret to say, for the most part Men of Science—who would persuade us that good writing, that style, is something extrinsic to the subject, a kind of ornamentation laid on to tickle the taste, a study for the *dilettante*, but beneath the notice of *their* stern and masculine minds. Such a view as he justly points out belongs rather to the Oriental mind than to our civilisation."

I presume the audience shouted and stamped and clapped, in celebration of that brilliant victory. So brilliant, indeed, that in his last address, his twelfth lecture, *On Style*, Sir Arthur singles Newman out again for this very exploit and lauds him again.<sup>2</sup>

Let us carry the argument a little further. This is what Nidhami-i-Arudi-i-Samarqandi, the twelfth century critic, has to say on the art of writing.

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The italics are mine.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, *The Art of Writing*. p. 234.

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دبیری صناعتی است مشتمل بر قیاسات خطابی و بلاغی ....  
و ظاهر گردانیدن ترتیب و نظام سخن در هر واقعه تا بر وجه اولی  
و اخری ادا کرده اید و دبیر باید که کریم الاصل شریف العرض  
دقیق النظر عمیق الفکر ثاقب الرای باشد و از قیاسات منطقی بعید و  
بیگانه نباشد و بحطام دنیاوی و مزخرفات آن مشغول نباشد و تحسین و  
تقیج اصحاب اغراض و ارباب اغراض التفات نکند و غره نشود ....  
و در سیاق سخن آن طریق گیرد که الفاظ متابع معانی آید و سخن  
کوتاه گردد که فصحای عرب گفته اند خبر الکلام ما قرء و دل  
زیرا که هر گاه که معانی متابع الفاظ نه آید سخن دراز شود و  
کاتب را مکار خوانند و ~~نمکن~~ مهذار

*The Secretarial Function is an art comprising reasoned modes of address and communication .....and displaying, in every case, orderly arrangement, so that all may be enunciated once and for all. Hence the secretary must be of gentle birth, of refined honour, of penetrating discernment, of profound reflection, of firm judgement. Neither must he be remote from or unacquainted with logical judgements..... Moreover, he should not be absorbed in the wealth and perishable goods of this world, nor concern himself with the approval or condemnation of prejudiced persons and tattlers, nor pay any heed to them.....and in the setting forth of his message he must adopt that method which the orators of the Arabs have thus described : "The best speech is that which is brief and significant and not wearisome." For if the ideas accord not with the words, the discussion will be protracted, and the scribe will be stigmatised as prolix, and "he who is prolix is a babbler."*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prof. E. G. Browne's translation.

We hurry on. Says Sir Arthur, the twentieth century critic :

Thought and speech are inseparable from each other. Matter and expression are parts of one ; style is a thinking out into language. This is what I have been laying down, and this is literature ; not *things*, but the verbal symbols of things ; not on the other hand mere *words* ; but thoughts expressed in language.....Does it not follow then that the more accurately we use words, the closer definition we shall give to our thoughts ? Does it not follow that by drilling ourselves to write perspicuously we train our minds to clarify their thought ? ..... Let me revert to our list of the qualities necessary to good writing, and come to the last—*Persuasiveness*; of which you may say indeed that it embraces the whole—not only the qualities of propriety, perspicuity, accuracy, we have been considering, but many another, such as harmony, order, sublimity, beauty of diction ; all in short that—*writing being an art, not a science*,<sup>1</sup> and therefore so personal a thing—may be summed up under the word *Charm*.

Nidhami may not be quite invulnerable, but can Sir Arthur claim to have made him vanish into thin air ?

I may be straining at a gnat but I feel today as I felt some years ago when I read the *The Art of Writing* for the first time. The critic who would deal fairly by England can hardly deal as fairly by the Continent, still less by the East, and he who is great enough "to correct, even to forget the insularity of his mind" does but pass out of his

<sup>1</sup> The Italics are mine.

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house into his neighbour's across the Channel, and the effort being exhaustive he builds there a little villa and rests. Then to him come the old, old faces, the Greek philosophers and the Roman authors, bringing their *tessellæ*,<sup>1</sup> and the talk is of that far-off Isle twenty-six miles away—which is Britain. All this is very beautiful. A painter may, if he likes, fill the canvas with a giant Shakespeare, under whose legs the petty Persians—Firdawsi, Sa'di, Hafiz—may walk and peep about to find themselves dishonourable graves, but I daresay he himself will not call it a masterpiece of pictorial art.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, *The Art of Writing*, p. 168.

III

To resume now the even tenour of our way, we will briefly consider the rise of the House of Ghazna, as given by Nidhamu'l-Mulk, the prime minister of the mighty Seljuqian Empire, which "stretched from the remotest parts of Transoxiana to the remotest parts of Syria."

البتگین که بنده و پرورده سامانیان بود به می و پنج سالگی  
میهسالاری خراسان یافت و سخت نیک عهد و وفادار بود و مردانه  
و با رای و تدبیر و مردم دار و خیل دوست و جوانمرد و فراخ نان  
و غمک و خدای ترس و همه سیرت سامانیان داشت و والی خراسان  
سالها بود - دوهزار و هفتصد غلام بنده و ترک داشت - روزی  
می غلام ترک خریده بود که سبکتگین پدر محمد یکی از  
ایشان بود..... البتگین در میان غلامان ایستاده بود که حاجب  
پیش آمد و البتگین را گفت که فلان غلام که وثاق  
باشی بود فرمان یافت و آن وثاق و رخت و خیل و میراث او بکدام  
غلام ارزانی باید داشت - چشم البتگین بر سبکتگین افتاد و بر  
زبان رفت که بدین غلام بخشیدم ،

Alptigin was the slave and protégé of the House of Saman and became the commander-in-chief of Khurasan in his thirty-fifth year. He was very trustworthy, virile, tactful, enterprising,



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entertaining, fond of company, chivalrous, well-to-do, and God-fearing. He had all the (noble) qualities of the Samanides, and had been the viceroy of Khurasan for years, and owned two thousand seven hundred Turkish slaves. One day, he purchased thirty Turkish slaves, one of whom was Subuktigin, the father of Mahmud ..... Alptigin was standing amidst his slaves when the chamberlain came forward and said: "A slave-captain is dead. To whom should his regiment, and uniform, and slaves, and property be given?" The eyes of Alptigin fell on Subuktigin, and he said: "To him have I given it."

Thereafter Subuktigin acquitted himself so well that he gained Alptigin's confidence and was confirmed in his rank. In the meantime, the Amir of Khurasan died—

و امير خراسان نوح بن منصور فرمان يافت و البتگين به  
نیشاپور بود و از مضرت بخارا امرا خواص به البتگين نبستند که  
حال چنان افتاد - امير خراسان در گذشت و او را برادری می ساله  
و پسری شانزده ساله مانده است - اگر صواب بینید ازین دو یکی  
را بجای او بنشانیم که مدار مملکت برتست - زود قاصد را گسیل کرد  
و نبشت که این هر دو تحت و ملک را شایسته اند و خداوند زادگان  
ما اند اما برادر مردي تمام است و مرد و گرم چشیده و هر یکی را  
نیک شناسد و قدر و منزلت بداند و حرمت نگه دارد و پسر کودک  
است و جهان نادیده ،

In the meantime, the Amir of Khurasan Nuh b. Mansur died. Alptigin was at Nishapur when the chief nobles wrote

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to him from the court of Bukhara in this wise : "The Amir is dead and leaves behind a brother of thirty years, and a son of sixteen. If you deem it appropriate, one of these we shall nominate to the throne, for the direction of affairs rests with you." He sent forth a messenger, in haste, with this reply : "Both of these become the throne and country, for both are our masters by birth, but the brother is a man of mature years and hath experience of the good and the bad, and knows each person's rank and status and honour, but the son is young and inexperienced."

The plot, however, was well-laid by Alptigin's rivals at court, who raised the son to the throne, and by continual misrepresentation and intrigue, so excited the royal jealousy that no alternative was left but war.

Thereupon Alptigin assembled his troops, and in plaintive terms addressed them :

من توانم که ملک از او بستانم و عمش را بجای او بنشانم  
لیکن می اندیشم که جهانیان گویند که البتگین شصت سال  
خاندان سامانیان را که خداوند او بودند نگاه داشت و عاقبت  
که عمر او بهشتاد رسید بر خداوند زادگان بیرون آمد و ملک  
از ایشان بستند و بجای خداوند خویش پشست و کفران  
نعمت کرد و من همه عمر به نیک نامی و نیک کامی گذاشته ام  
اکنون که بلب گور رسیدم واجب نکند که زشت نام کردم  
هر چند معلوم است که گناه از جانب اوست لیکن همه

مردمان ندانند - گروهی گویند گداه امیر است و گروهی  
گویند جرم البتگین را بود - و هر چند من بملك ایشان  
آرزو ندارم و کراهیت ایشان نخواهم تا من در خراسان می باشم  
این گفت گوی کم نشود ..... و چون من ترك  
خراسان بگویم و از ملك او بیرون شوم صاحب غرض را  
بجال سخن نماند - و دیگر چون مرا پس از این شمشیر باید  
کشید نانانی بدست آرم - و باقی عمر بگذارم باری شمشیر در  
روی کافر کشم تا ثواب یابم - اکنون بدانید ای لشکر که  
خراسان و خوارزم و نیروز و ماوراءالنهر از آن امیر منصور  
است و شما همه فرمان بردار اویدد ..... برخیزید  
و بدرگاه او روید ..... که من بهندوستان  
خواهم شد و بفزا و جهاد مشغول باشم - اگر کشته شوم  
شهید باشم و اگر توفیق یابم دار کفر را دار اسلام گردانم .....  
این بگفت و برخاست و امیران را گفت يك يك پیش من  
آئید تا شما را وداع کنم - هر چند امیران گفتند سود  
نداشت - و گریستن بر ایشان افتاد - گریان گریان آمدند و  
او را وداع کردند ..... و با اینهمه هیچکس  
باور نمی کرد که او خراسان بگذارد و بهندوستان رود -  
از بهر آنکه او را در خراسان و ماوراءالنهر پانصد پاره دبه

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ك بود و هیچ شهری نبود که او را در آن شهر سرا و باغ و  
اروان سراي و گرمابه نبود و مستغل بسیار داشت و هزار  
زار گوسفند و صد هزار اسب و اشتر و آستر داشت - در  
ك سامانیان يك روز آن دیدند که بانگ کوس برخاست و  
تنگین با غلامان و حاشیت خویش کوچ کرد و ترك این همه  
لغت ،

I can wrest the kingdom from his hand, and place his uncle, in his stead, on the throne, but I fear that people will say : "For sixty years, Alptigin looked after the Samanides, for they were his masters, but at last when he reached the eightieth year of his life, he rose on his masters' kith and kin, and wrested their country from them, and sat in their seat, and showed ingratitude. And I have passed my life nobly and have earned a good name; now that I have reached the sunset of my days it doth not become me to get an evil name. Although it is known that the fault rests with him, yet not all are aware of this ; wherefore some say that it is the fault of the Amir, some that it is the fault of Alptigin. I do not covet their kingdom, nor wish them ill, yet as long as I remain in Khurasan, this talk will not cease.....but when I have left Khurasan, and am gone out of the kingdom, the interested person will not have the power to slander. Moreover, since hereafter I must draw the sword to earn a living and pass my days, I may as well draw it in the face of the infidel so that I may have merit (before God). Remember, O my soldiers, that Khwarazm, Nimruz, and Transoxiana are the Amir Mansur's, and you all owe allegiance to him. Rise and go to his court, for I shall go to India and engage myself in a religious war. If I fall, I fall a martyr; if I win, I convert a pagan land to Islam." Thus he addressed the troops. And, "Come one by one before me," said he to the officers, "that I may wish you farewell." Howsoever much they

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remonstrated, it was of no avail, and they fell a-weeping. All in tears, they came and bade him farewell.

Nevertheless, no one believed that he would leave Khurasan and go to India for he had in Khurasan and Transoxiana five hundred villages, and there was not a town in which he did not have a palace and a garden, and caravanserai, and baths. (Further) he had much corn, a million head of sheep, and a hundred thousand head of horse, camel, and mule. Nevertheless, there arose, one day, in the land of the Samanides, the roar of the war-drum, and Alptigin marched away with his slaves and retinue, leaving all this (wealth) behind.

Alptigin reached Balkh *en route* for India, and passing through Bamyan and Kabul arrived at Ghazna as a conqueror. Then he had the heralds proclaim—

منادی فرمود که هیچکس مبادا که چیزی از هیچکس به-شاند الا  
بزر بخرد و اگر معلوم شود او را سیاست کنم - مگر روزی چشم  
البتگین بر غلامی ترک افتاد از آن خویش - نوبره گاه و مرغی برفتراک  
بسته گفت آن غلام بمن آرید - پیش او بردند - پرسید که این  
مرغ از کجا آوردی - گفت از روستای بستدم - گفت همراهی  
یست گاهی مشاھرہ از من نمی ستانی - گفت می ستانم گفت پس چرا  
بزر بخری و چرا بظلم بستدی - در وقت فرمود تا آن غلام را بدو نیم  
زدند و آنجا بر سر راه با آن نوبره گاه بیاویختند و سه روز منادی  
کردند که هر آنکس که مال مسلمانان - شاند هم چنان با او کنم که  
غلام خود را کردم - لشکر او سخت بترسید و مردم رعیت این شدند

## *The Rise of the House of Ghazna*

"Let every one beware lest he take anything from any person unless he pay for it. He who disobeys will be punished." One day, Alptigin chanced to see a slave of his, with a fowl and a bag of hay tied to his saddle. "Bring that slave to me," said he. They did so. "Whence hast thou brought it?" he asked. "I took it from a peasant." "But dost thou not get from me each month an allowance of twenty (slaves)?" "I do." "Then why didst thou not pay for it, instead of taking it by force?" So he forthwith ordered the man to be cut in halves, and to be hanged there and then with the bag and the fowl. Thereafter, for three days, he publicly proclaimed: "Whosoever taketh the property of any Muhammadan, with him will I deal as I have dealt with my slave." So the army was terror-struck, and the people enjoyed security.

By such rigorous enforcement of order, and dispensation of justice, he maintained discipline in the army and won popular confidence. He beat back the Samanides and even advanced on India, where, in the fulness of age, he died.

Usually the Persian historian has little to say on Alptigin, for his concern—and herein, indeed, lies the defect not so much of the Persian historian as of Persian character—is chiefly with great conquerors or princes of noble blood. Thus on the one hand, the Macedonian Alexander and the Mongol Chingiz Khan have been so nationalised that their identity with Persia is complete. And on the other hand, the impotent successors of the Sasanian Nushirwan, some of whom were totally devoid of any redeeming feature, have been fondly exalted to the dignity of the Achæmenian

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Cyrus.<sup>1</sup> But Alptigin, a true gentleman if ever there was one, remains buried under the dust of centuries, though, in the words of Nidhamu'l-Mulk (perhaps written intentionally as applicable to himself, for with him ended the most brilliant period of the Seljuq empire) :

چون او از خراسان برفت دولت از خاندان سامانیان برفت

When he left Khurasan, royalty left the Samanide House.

Ghaznawide history now merges insensibly into fiction. One writer makes Subuktigin almost the immediate successor of Alptigin. Another puts the sceptre in the hand of Ishaq, the son of Alptigin. A third, feeling probably that a certain stretch of time has to be represented, makes Ishaq, and Bilkatigin, and Amir Pari enjoy in turn the pleasures of sovereignty. There is unanimous evidence, however, that Subuktigin was elected unanimously to the throne. His reign was just and kindly, and he left the kingdom of Ghazna compact and prosperous. Subuktigin's two sons, Isma'il and Mahmud, fell out with each other shortly after the death of their father, over the division of spoils. A civil war ensued (998 A.D.) which saw, at the end, Mahmud on the throne, and Isma'il in prison.

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<sup>1</sup> See Firdawsi's verdict on Yazdigird, *supra*, pp. 16-17.

## *The Ghaznawide Ascendancy and Decline*





## *The Ghaznawide Ascendancy and Decline*

### I

Of the birth of Mahmud, who is said to have been the first Muslim sovereign to assume the title of Sultan and to style himself as the "Shadow of God on Earth," it is related in the *Minhaj-us-Siraj* that Subuktigin saw in a dream a tree growing out of his fire-place, so high that it overshadowed the world. And the prompt interpretation was that the new-comer would be ruler of East and West ! Probably there is not one great Oriental ruler to whom an apocryphal story is not accredited by the considerate historian glad to break the tedium of his long narrative. These transitional periods are too frequent to permit of a fresh story each time, so that the old tales are re-told. Supernatural agents, by overthrowing palaces, and bursting river-dams of rival monarchies, cause in the East even greater harm than irreconcilable enemies.

It is out of place here to describe in detail the campaigns of Mahmud. "He pushed back the Buwayhids, absorbed the realms of the Ziyarids, overthrew the Samanids, invaded India in twelve successive campaigns in twice that number of years (A.D. 1001—24), and enlarged the comparatively narrow borders of the kingdom which he had inherited until it extended from

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Bukhara and Samarqand to Guzerat and Qinnawj, and included Afghanistan, Transoxiana, Khurasan, Tabaristan, Sistan, Kashmir, and a large part of North-Western India.”<sup>1</sup>

More important from our point of view is Mahmud's character. Like Alptigin and Subuktigin he possessed almost superhuman energy ; and with them also did he share his religious zeal, though his primary motive was different. But here the comparison ends. Gone was the simplicity of Alptigin, and the humility of Subuktigin. Unlike his father, he inherited the crown, and retained it not by popular will but by personal choice. Unlike Alptigin, he was both capricious and avaricious. Alptigin left Khurasan and his wealth without a sigh ; Mahmud could not part with his treasures without a torrent of tears.

سلطان محمود پیش از وفات خود بدو روز فرمان داد  
تا از خزانه صرهای زر سرخ و سفید و انواع جواهر نفیسه  
و اصناف نفائس که در مدت حیات خود جمع کرده بود  
در صحن مرای حاضر ساخته خانه را گلشن ارم گردانند و  
او در آنها بچشم حسرت نگریسته بهاییهای گریست و بعد از  
ساعتی بخزانه واپس فرستاد و در چنان وقت احدی را از آن

<sup>1</sup> Browne. E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. II. p. 95.

## *The Ghaznawide Ascendancy and Decline*

بهره مند و مستفیض نگردانید و ازین قسم چیزهاست که  
آن شاه والا انژاد را به بخل نسبت میدهند

Two days before his death, Sultan Mahmud ordered that the money-bags of gold and silver, and the several gems of the finest (water), and the vast valuables which he had amassed in his life-time should be transferred from the treasury to the court-yard of his palace. The place became a veritable garden of Iram; and the Sultan cast his eyes longingly on his treasure and wept profusely. An hour later he had the treasure removed and (not even) at such a time did he let a single soul benefit by it. Actions of this sort have made that monarch of illustrious birth appear as a miser.

Jealous of the Sunni faith, Mahmud became with advancing age so intolerant that men of learning avoided his court, notwithstanding the allurements of his princely patronage.

ابوالعباس مامون خوارزمشاه وزیري داشت نام او  
ابوالحسین احمد بن محمد السہل - مردی حکیم طبع و کریم  
نفس و فاضل و خوارزمشاه همچنین حکیم طبع و فاضل  
دوست بود و بسبب ایشان چندین حکیم و فاضل بر آن  
درگاه جمع شده بودند چون ابو علی سینا و ابو سهل مسیحی و  
ابوالخیر خمار و ابو ریحان بیرونی و ابو نصر عراق ..... این  
طائفه در آن خدمت از دنیاوی بی نیازی داشتند و بایکدیگر  
انسی در محاورت و عیشی در مکاتبت میکردند - روزگار

برنپسندید و فلک روا نداشت — آن عیش بر ایشان منقص  
شد و آن روزگار بر ایشان بزبان آمد. از نزدیک سلطان بین الدوله  
محمود معروفی رسید با نامه — مضمون نامه آنکه شنیدم که در  
مجلس خوارزمشاه چند کس اند از اهل فضل که عدم النظیر  
اند چون فلان و فلان — باید که ایشان را بمجلس ما فرستی  
تا ایشان شرف مجلس ما حاصل کنند و ما بعلوم کفایت ایشان  
مستظهر شویم و آن منت از خوارزمشاه داریم — و رسول وی  
خواجه حسین بن علی میکال بود ..... خوارزمشاه  
خواجه حسین میکال را بجای نیک فرود آورد و علفه شگرف  
فرمود و پیش از آنکه او را بار داد حکما را بخواند و این نامه  
بر ایشان عرضه کرد و گفت محمود قوی دست است و لشکر  
بسیار دارد و خراسان و هندوستان ضبط کرده است و طمع  
در عراق بسته — من نتوانم که مثال او را امثال نمایم و فرمان  
او را بنفاز نپیوندم شما درین چه گوئید — ابوعلی و ابوسهل  
گفتند ما نرویم اما ابو نصر و ابو الخیر و ابو ریحان رغبت  
نمودند که اخبار صلات و هبات سلطان همی شنیدند — پس  
خوارزمشاه گفت شما دو تن را که رغبت نیست پیش از آنکه  
من این مرد را بار دم شما سر خویش گیرید — پس خواجه  
اسباب ابوعلی و ابوسهل بساخت و دلیل همراه ایشان کرد و

از راه گرگان روی به گرگان نهادند - روز دیگر خوارزمشاه حسین میکال را بار داد و نیکوئیاها پیوست و گفت نامه خواندم و بر مضمون نامه و فرمان پادشاه وقوف افتاد - ابوعلی و ابوسهل برفته اند لیکن ابو نصر و ابو ریحان و ابوالخیر بسیج میکنند که پیش خدمت آیند - و به اندک روزگار برگ ایشان بساخت و باخواجه حسین میکال فرستاد و به بلخ بخدمت سلطان یمن الدوله محمود آمدند و بحضرت او پیوستند - و سلطان را مقصود از ایشان ابوعلی بوده بود و ابو نصر عراق نقاش بود - بفرمود تا صورت ابوعلی بر کاغذ نگاشت و نقاشان را بخواند تا بر آن مثال چهل صورت نگاشتند و با مناشیر به اطراف فرستادند و از اصحاب اطراف درخواست که مردی است بدین صورت و او را ابوعلی سینا گویند طلب کنند و او را بمن فرستند ..... قابوس را عظیم عجب آمد و گفت او را بمن آرید - خواجه ابوعلی را پیش قابوس بردند و قابوس صورت ابوعلی سینا داشت که سلطان یمن الدوله فرستاده بود چون پیش قابوس آمد گفت «انت ابوعلی» - گفت «نعم یا ایها الملك المعظم» قابوس از تحت

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فرود آمد و چند گام ابوعلی را استقبال کرد و در کنارش گرفت  
و با او بر یکی نهالی پیش تخت بنشست و بزرگها پیوست  
و نیکو پرسید

<sup>1</sup> Ma'mún Khwárazmsháh had an accomplished Minister named Abu'l-Hasan Ahmad b. Muhammad. He was a man of learning and a friend of scholars, and consequently many philosophers and men of erudition, such as Abú 'Ali b. Siná, Abú Sahl Masíhí, Abu'l Hasan Khámmar, Abú Nasr 'Arráq, and Abú Rayhán Al-Bírúní, gathered about his court.....And all these were, in this their service, independent of worldly cares, and maintained with one another familiar intercourse and pleasant correspondence.

But Fortune, as is its custom, disapproved of this; though the King would not willingly have destroyed this happiness of theirs, or brought these pleasant days to an end. So a notable arrived from Sultán Mahmúd Yámin-u'd-Dawla with a letter, whereof the purport was as follows : "I have heard that there are in attendance on Khwárazmsháh several men of learning, each unrivalled in his science, such as So-and-so and So-and-so. You must send them to my court, so that they may attain the honour of attendance thereat. We rely on being enabled to profit by their knowledge and skill, and request this favour on the part of Khwárazmsháh."

Now the bearer of this message was Khwája Husayn 'Afi Miká'il .....So Khwárazmsháh entertained Husayn 'Ali Miká'il in the best of lodgings and ordered him to be supplied with all materials suitable for a prolonged stay ; but, before according him an audience, he summoned the philosophers and laid before them the King's letter, saying : "The King is strong, and has a large army recruited from Khurásán and India,

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

## *The Ghaznawide Ascendancy and Decline*

and he covets 'Irāq. I cannot refuse to obey his order or be disobedient to his mandate. What say ye on this matter?" They answered, "We cannot abandon thy service, nor will we in any wise go to him." But Abú Nasr and Abu'l Hasan and Abú Rayhān were eager to go, having heard accounts of the King's munificent gifts and presents. Then said Khwārazmshāh: "You two, who have no inclination to go, take your own way before I summon this man before me." Then he equipped Abú 'Alí (b. Sīnā) and Abú Sahl, and arranged a plan for them and sent with them a guide, and they set off through the desert towards Māzandarān.

Next day, Khwārazmshāh accorded Husayn 'Alí Mīkā'il an audience, and heaped on him all sorts of compliments. "I have read the letter," said he, "and have acquainted myself with its contents and with the King's command. Abú 'Alī and Abú Sahl are gone, but I will provide equipment for Abú Nasr and Abú Rayhān and Abu'l Hasan, so that they may enjoy the honour of entering that august Presence." So in a little while he provided their outfit, and despatched them in the company of Khwāja Husayn 'Alí Mīkā'il to Balkh. So they came into the presence of Sultān Yaminu'd-Dawla, and joined the King's court.

Now it was Abú 'Alí (b. Sīnā) whom the King chiefly desired. He commanded Abú Nasr the painter to draw his portrait on paper, and he ordered the other artists to make forty copies of the portrait, and these he despatched in all directions, placing them in the hands of persons of note, to whom he said, "There is a man after this likeness, whom they call Abú 'Alī b. Sīnā. Seek him out and send him to me."

Abu Sahl perishes in a dust storm, and Abu 'Alī reaches Nishapur in safety—to find that the Ghazna police are after him. Thence he escapes



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to Gurgan where he is called upon to treat the nephew of Qabus for an unknown affliction. By taking the patient's pulse he discovers love-sickness, and even the name and address of the beloved herself.

Then they reported this matter to Qabus who was amazed thereat and said, "Bring him before me." So Abū 'Alī b. Sinā was brought before Qabus. Now Qabus had a copy of Abū 'Alī's portrait which Yamin-u'd Dawla had sent to him. "Why, here is 'Abū 'Alī !" exclaimed he. "Yes, O most puissant Prince," replied the other. Then Qabus came down from his throne, advanced several paces to meet Abū 'Alī, embraced him, conversed genially with him, sat down beside him, and said, "O greatest and most accomplished philosopher of the world, explain to me the rationale of this treatment !<sup>1</sup>

Such was Persia in the days of her glory—when Persian national feeling was at its flood-tide, when monarchs sent costly embassies to invite, attract, and kidnap savants from distant courts, when philosophers deeming even the brilliant court of Ghazna an intellectual grave-yard sought death in unknown wildernesses, when portraits of learned fugitives circulated through different lands under the royal seal and signature as warrants of arrest, when haughty despots descended from their thrones and bent their knees before knowledge.

I ask you to remember Wolfe with the seal of his fate on him, stepping into his bateau on the dark St. Lawrence River and quoting as they tided him over

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

## *The Ghaznawide Ascendancy and Decline*

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave  
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour ;  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

'I had rather be the author of that poem,' said Wolfe, 'than take Quebec.' That is how our forefathers valued noble writing.<sup>1</sup>

Magnificent truly, and yet not so magnificent as the much earlier scene laid in the East of Abu 'Ali, the coveted trophy of Mahmud, eluding an elaborate literary hunt and stepping into the presence of Qabus seated pompously on his throne. Qabus turns to an identity portrait, scorns the ultimatum of Ghazna and the empire of Gurgan, and gathers the wanted fugitive to his heart. Such was the status of the learned man in Ghaznawide Persia and such the recognition of that status !

"While men may migrate for the sake of learning," says Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, "I do not remember to have heard of their making war for it. On this point they content themselves with calling one another names."<sup>2</sup>

True perhaps—if an ultimatum be the synonym for calling names ; and a death in the desert the result of that ultimatum. I am constrained to

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<sup>1</sup> Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch, *The Art of Writing*. p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch, *Studies in Literature*. 1st. Series. p. 5.

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believe that even the student of English literature may occasionally benefit by reading the history of the Persian infidels.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to Mirza Muhammad of Qazwin the anecdote is apocryphal in parts. Abu Rayhan was not sent to Ghazna but was brought there, together with other men of learning, by Sultan Mahmud after the conquest of Khwarazm in 407 Hg. There is no doubt, however, that the invasion of Khwarazm was not merely for territorial conquest but also for the seizure of the learned men whom the Khwarazmshahs had gathered, and it is immaterial whether they were acquired merely by threat of war or by an actual invasion, so long as they were the cause or one of the causes of that ultimatum or invasion.

Mirza Muhammad also disputes the interview of Qabus and Avicenna, for Qabus was murdered before Avicenna could reach his court. That learning was highly respected in Ghaznawide Persia remains, however, irrefutable. Even the cautious Mirza Muhammad quotes ابن ابی اصیبه as saying, "Sultan Mahmud would kiss the ground before Abul Khair Khammar (one of the five philosophers mentioned by Nidhami) in recognition of his learning."

## *The Ghaznawide Ascendancy and Decline*

### II

About the middle of April A. D. 1030, Sultan Mahmud died and was buried in Ghazna. He had reigned thirty-three years.

The Eastern annalists who invariably become encomiastic when dealing with a great king, describe him as a paragon of virtue whose star of nativity corresponded with that of the Prophet Muhammad, and whose birth was accompanied with the fracture of the temple of Wahind on the confines of Peshawar. With such impotent fabrications, bereft even of a show of ingenuity, we have little concern save that by being introduced at the very commencement of a narrative, they serve splendidly as warnings. I am conscious that here I repeat what I have said before, but the repetition, I believe, is necessary. Prof. E. G. Browne—and I say this without any irreverence for his monumental services to Persia and to Persian culture—whilst acknowledging that Dawlatshah, for example, “is not a very accurate writer”<sup>1</sup> says, a little lower down, of his *Memoirs of the Poets*, “that it is the best manual of Persian literary history existing in the Persian language, which incidentally contains a great deal of general history, and

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<sup>1</sup> Dawlatshah, *Tazkirat-us-Shuara*, ed: Browne E. G. Preface. p. 6.

altogether, in my opinion, few Persian books could be named which the student of Persian literature would read with more pleasure and profit than this." Five years later, in his second volume of the *Literary History of Persia*, his ardour for Dawlatshah has much cooled down—Dawlatshah, "as has already been pointed out, is of little weight as an authority, and much addicted to romance."<sup>1</sup> The climax is reached in Prof. Browne's preface to Mirza Muhammad's *Masud-i-Sad-i-Salman* published the same year as his second volume of the *Literary History of Persia* where Dawlatshah is regarded as "utterly uncritical and unworthy of confidence." Surely, then, one does not expect to find Dawlatshah mentioned seventy-five times in the course of a book which purports not to deal with Dawlatshah, or with romance, but with literary history?

According to the *Tarikh-i-Firishta*<sup>2</sup> Mahmud was of middle stature and of elegant proportion, but his face was scarred with pox. One day, he looked at himself in the mirror,<sup>3</sup> and was so disgusted with his appearance that he told his Wazir who happened to be near

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<sup>1</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. II. p. 541.

<sup>2</sup> *Tarikh-i-Firishta*, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Muir gives a similar anecdote of the Umayyad Caliph Sulayman. See *The Rise, Decline, and Fall of the Caliphate*, p. 368.

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مشهور است که دیدن روی پادشاهان نور بصیرتی افزاید این  
شکلی که مراست عجب که بیننده آزار بکشد - وزیر گفت صورت  
از هزار یکی نه بیند اما سیرت همکنان را شامل است پس بر سیرت  
پسندیده قیام نما تا محبوب دلها باشی

"It is well-known that the sight of the countenance of kings increases the vision (of people) but with a face as I have what wonder that the seer is tormented thereat." Said the minister : "One in a thousand doth not behold thy face, but thy character all : wherefore, depend on nobility of character that thou become the darling of all hearts." <sup>1</sup>

And, continues this history, Mahmud took his lesson to heart and altered his ways - by having Abu Rayhan (al-Biruni) cast down from a high palace for the 'offence' of truthful speech,<sup>2</sup> and subsequently confining him for six months in the citadel of Ghazna for repeating the 'offence', by paying Firdawsi the paltry sum of twenty thousand dirhams for his thirty years' intellectual labour, by arraigning a wealthy man of Nishapur<sup>3</sup> on a trumpeted charge of heresy and despoiling him of his riches when he denied the allegation.

سلطان باو خطاب کرد که ای فلاں بمن خبری

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

<sup>2</sup> *Chahar Maqala*, p. 57. *et. seq.*

<sup>3</sup> *Tarikh-i-Firishla*, p. 36.

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چنین رسیده که تو از ملاحدہ و قرامطہ آن مرد جواب داد کہ ای پادشاہ با انصاف من ملحد و قرامطی نیستم - عیم همین است کہ مال فراوان دارم - ہرچہ هست از من بہستان و مرا بدنام مکن - سلطان محمود تمامی اموال از وی بگرفت و نشانی در باب حسن عقیدت او نوشتہ بدو تسلیم کرد

The Sultan said : 'O fellow, I have heard you are a Carmathian heretic.' The man replied : 'O just king, I am no Carmathian, nor a heretic. My fault is this that I possess enormous wealth. Take all, but dishonour not my name.' So the Sultan took all his wealth, and gave him a certificate vouchsafing his integrity of faith.

Of the state of the Ghaznawide court, it is related in the *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* that "Sultan Mahmud possessed two thousand five hundred elephants, and that his court was guarded by four thousand Turkish slave-youths, who, on days of public audience were stationed on the right and left of the throne—two thousand of them with caps ornamented with four feathers, bearing golden maces, on the right hand, and the other two thousand with caps adorned with two feathers, bearing silver maces, on the left." Mahmud's love for Turkish slave-boys—especially Ayaz—and music, wine, and fulsome flattery alternated with religious devotion, iconoclastic zeal, and love of masculine speech.

## *The Ghaznawide Ascendancy and Decline*

The over-night's libertine is the champion of Islam by day ; and the fanatical money-hoarder who in Ghazna cuts Firdawsi off from him for a Mutazilite verse

یومین زادم و مبرین بگذرم      یقین دان که خاک پی حیدرم

In this I was born and in this I will pass away ;  
Know for a surety that I am as dust at the feet of 'Ali.

is in the field a magnanimous and repentant donor, moved almost to delirium and reprehensible liberality over a single couplet of high-spirited poetry.

اگر جز بکام من آید جواب      من و گرز و میدان و انرا سیاب

If the answer prove contrary to my wish  
Then I shall take the mace and the field against Afrasiyab.

The effect in Firdawsi's particular case is marred by the pathos of the closing scene—the poet's ignorance of the king's attempt at reconciliation, the arrival of the king's treasure when the poet's cortege is leaving his house, and the refusal of his daughter to accept the rich gift as a posthumous honour. Yet the verdict of meanness and injustice on Mahmud would rather lay the critic open to the charge of illiberalism<sup>1</sup> than Mahmud to the charge of illiberality.

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<sup>1</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. II. p. 98.



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**In his dealings with men, Mahmud did not maintain consistently a high level of morality : he rose, and fell, and rose again ; and whilst we condemn him for the fall, we applaud him for the recovery.**

## *The Ghaznawide Ascendancy and Decline*

### III

Mahmud's death led to a war of succession from which Mas'ud emerged victorious. Unlike his father the new king was exceedingly generous, so much so that he distributed a lac of *dirhams* in charity in a single day.<sup>1</sup> Enormous sums were given to poets and men of learning: an elephant-load of silver was presented to 'Alawi Zeenati for his verses and a similar amount to al-Biruni for his *Qanun-i-Mas'udi*.<sup>2</sup> Al-Biruni, however, returned the gift to the royal treasury—"a proceeding contrary to human nature", according to Shahrazuri.

But the son was more like his father than unlike him. He had the same passion for Turkish slave-youths, and the same love of wine. Baihaqi describes a drinking-party of fifty. As the goblets each containing half a maund of wine were passed round, the tipsters reeled over one by one and were carried away. Finally Mas'ud and the Khwaja Abdur-Razzaq were left alone. The latter, however, drained his eighteenth cup before he was helped out. But the Amir, drank nine

<sup>1</sup> *Tarikh-i-Firishla*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Camels conveyed Mahmud's gift to Firdawsi. The son probably wishing to outdo his father had his gifts carried on elephants.

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more, called for a basin of water and his prayer carpet, and said his prayers as though he had not tasted a drop. Evidently Mas'ud had a superb constitution. Indeed his strength was such that no one could lift his battle-axe from the ground with one hand. Mahmud envied his son's physique and valour, and obtained letters patent from the Caliph at Baghdad, superseding him in succession in favour of his brother Muhammad.

چون آن امثال در بارگاه سلطان محمود بخواندند بر خاطر جمله  
امرا و ملوک گران آمد و چون سلطان مسعود از آن مجلس بیرون  
رفت ابونصر گوید که من هم از عقب او رفتم و گفتم بسبب تاخیر  
لقب شما دل من و جمیع امرا بسوخت — سلطان مسعود فرمود هیچ  
اندیشه مدار که گفته اند السیف آصدق و انباء من الکتب  
چون باز گشتم سلطان مرا طلب فرمود و گفت در عقب سلطان  
مسعود چرا رفتی و چه همزبانی کردی؟ همه ماجرا بی نقصان باز  
نمودم — سلطان گفت من نیز میدانم که سلطان مسعود را بهمه باب بر  
امیر محمد ترجیح است و بعد از من ملک به مسعود خواهد رسید  
اما این همه برای این میکنم که این امیر محمد بیچاره در عهد من  
اندک حرمتی داشته باشد

## *The Ghaznawide Ascendancy and Decline*

When they read that order in the court of Sultan Mahmud, all the nobles and ministers<sup>1</sup> were deeply grieved, and when Sultan Mas'ud left the meeting, says Abu Nasr: "I too went after him, and said: 'Through the supersession of your title, I and the nobles are sore oppressed.' Said Sultan Mas'ud: "Have no fear," for they have said: 'The Sword is a truer prophet than the Script.' When I returned, Sultan (Mahmud) sent for me and said: 'Why didst thou follow him and what didst thou say?' I placed the whole affair before him. Said Mahmud: 'I likewise am aware that Sultan Mas'ud has in every way precedence over Amir Muhammad, and after me the kingdom will devolve upon him. Yet all that I do, I do that poor Amir Muhammad may have in my reign some glory.'"

The language of Mahmud is significant. He calls Mas'ud by the title of Sultan, and Muhammad by the title of Amir, when he himself has made Muhammad heir-apparent ! In the East, pleasing tales soon pass into history. No doubt, they contain a vein of truth, but who can reach it ?

Mas'ud ruled for eleven years, over a steadily-contracting kingdom. Little by little the Seljuqs encroached upon his dominions, but he made light of the matter, and continued to indulge in his insatiate passion for Indian expeditions, so that eventually all Khurasan was lost to him. A crushing defeat inflicted by the Seljuqs in 1040 A.D. led to his fall and assassination.

Of this last battle of the king, it is related in the *Rahatus-Sudur* that "Mas'ud, mounted on a

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<sup>1</sup> The text has 'kings.'

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female elephant, was hastening on by a forced night-march to prevent the Seljuq forces from effecting a junction. Unfortunately he fell asleep on the elephant's back and his retainers dared not wake him or continue the march. When he awoke at day-break, it was all over. During the rout and fight of the Ghaznawide army, Mas'ud dealt one of the pursuing Turkomans so terrible and deadly a blow that the comrades of the victim dared not press the pursuit. 'Such,' said Mas'ud,

زخم این است اما اقبال نیست

'is my sword-stroke but luck is wanting.' <sup>1</sup>

Mas'ud maintained a magnificent court. "He used to sit on an ornamented golden throne over which, by golden chains, was suspended a crown of beaten gold weighing seventy maunds in weight. Then the crown was lowered over the king's head, and the levee began."<sup>2</sup> The grandeur of the Ghaznawide court is but a re-introduction of the *فرکاریانی* or "Royal Splendour" of the Sasanian kings. Prof. Browne quotes Ibn Hisham as saying: "Now Kisra (Khusraw Anushirwan) used to sit in his audience-hall where was his crown, like

<sup>1</sup> Browne, E. G. *Account of a Rare Manuscript History of the Seljuqs*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> *Tarikh-i-Farishla*, p. 42.

## *The Ghaznawide Ascendancy and Decline*

unto a mighty cask, according to what they say, set with rubies, emeralds, and pearls, with gold and silver, suspended by a chain of gold from the top of an arch in this his audience-hall; and his neck could not support the crown, but he was veiled by draperies till he had taken his seat in this his audience-hall, and had introduced his head within his crown and had settled himself in his place, whereupon the draperies were withdrawn.”<sup>1</sup>

The Persian national movement had now reached its ascendancy. Earlier, the Saffarides and the Samanides had thrown themselves wholeheartedly into it. They had stimulated it, they had advanced it, they had identified themselves with it. The current, once set, rolled on by itself—till it drew within it both the Turk and the Arab, the Afghan and the Persian. The Ghaznawides, Alptigin and Subuktigin, had no consciousness whatever of a national movement, but they were swept into it as though they had been its authors. Mahmud was so far from being a nationalist that he revived the embers of the Arab faith, and made *jihad* the chief mission of his life, and yet the wave of Persian nationalism, self-sustained, self-driven, engulfed him also, as it did afterwards the Seljuqs, so that the court of Ghazna, became not a depot for fanatical Arab soldiery, not a rendezvous for

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<sup>1</sup> Browne, E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. I. pp. 128-29.

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orthodox Muslim devotees, but the focus of that culture which gave the victory to Pahlawi over Arabic, to Rustam over Khalid, to Yazdigird over 'Umar. And so Ghazna became not another Medina or Damascus, not even another Baghdad, but, in a sense, in spite of Mahmud, a second Susa or Ecbatana, a new and novel Persepolis.

## *The Ghaznawide Ascendancy and Decline*

### IV

In passing from the king to the nobles of the court, we have in Baihaqi's *Tarikh-us-Subuktigin*, "whose minutiae and trifles frequently constitute its chief merit," a vivid account of court ceremonies and court etiquette. Says Baihaqi of the investiture of Mas'ud's Prime Minister, Khwaja Ahmad Hasan of Maymand :

The Khwaja then invested himself with his official robes. There was a garment of scarlet cloth of Baghdad, embroidered with small flowers, a long turban of the finest muslin with a delicate lace-border, a large chain and a girdle of one thousand misqals studded with torquoises. When the Khwaja came out, Hajib Bilkigin stood up, offered his congratulations, and presented one *dinar*, one small turban, and two very large torquoises set in a ring.....Then, they conducted the Khwaja to the Amir (Sultan Mas'ud). The Khwaja kissed the ground, approached the throne, and presented a bunch of pearls to the king, which was said to be valued at ten thousand *dinars*. The Amir Mas'ud gave the Khwaja a ring set with a torquoise, on which His Majesty's name was engraved, and said, "This is the seal of state, and I give it to you that the people may know that the Khwaja's authority is next to mine." The Khwaja took the ring, kissed the Amir's hand and the ground and returned to his house.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of such elaborate technique in court ceremonies was, of course, to impress the subjects with respect for Royal Majesty. The

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<sup>1</sup> Elliot's *History of India*, Vol. II. p. 68-69.



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virility and valour of earlier sovereigns had supplied this for itself unaided by showers of pearl and gold; but as Muir well remarks "in proportion as the ruler and his retinue fell from virtue into depravity and vice, the surroundings would rise into every kind of wanton grandeur and excess."<sup>1</sup> A replete treasury and an effete soldiery do not long sustain the prestige of a decadent empire. The impotent display of wealth provokes cupidity and foreign invasion rather than awe, and contains in itself the seed of disruption. It destroys what it vainly would conserve. Fifteen years after Mahmud, the House of Ghazna almost disappears from Persian History.

The reaction of court-life and "royal splendour" on contemporary literature—a reaction at once intimate and profound—we shall have occasion to notice in subsequent pages.

<sup>1</sup> Muir's *Rise, Decline, and Fall of the Caliphate*, p. 566.

# *The Poetry of Firdawsi*



## *The Poetry of Firdāwsi*

Abul Qāsim Firdāwsi fills a place apart from the Ghaznawide poets as a group. His contemporaries are removed from him, not because they are inferior to him in mental stature—for they undoubtedly wrote Persian literature when to write Persian at all was to write literature—but because they are opposed to him in mental outlook. For although they are Persians and poets they are not Persian poets, and they write not for Persia. If not entirely for themselves and their patrons, they write for the world's *intelligentsia*. Hence their greatness. They are great because they are natural and international. Firdāwsi, however, is great because he is natural and national.

Firdāwsi thus stands in a class by himself. He disdains to be circumscribed within the inner zone of individualism. He refuses to transgress the outer zone of nationalism. For him, the world beyond the Nile or the Ganges may never have been—little even of the world beyond the Euphrates and the Jaxartes. But within Persia

O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense or rare  
With head, hands, wings or feet pursues his way  
And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.<sup>1</sup>

We have to keep this aspect before our eyes to

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<sup>1</sup> Milton: *Paradise Lost*.

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appreciate Firdawsi's *Shah-Nama*. No other poet of Persia was more genuinely Persian. A Persian stone outweighed in his estimate all the mountain tracts of Turan; and the splendour of Mount Sinai, radiant in divine glory,<sup>1</sup> paled in his eyes before the flames of the sacred fire in a Magian temple.

It seems superfluous to insist on this point, for all biographers of Firdawsi are unanimous on his all-pervading nationalism. And yet I feel that perhaps a supernatural visitation may be ultimately necessary to drive this fact home. Nothing in the world is so common as to lose the scent when it is hottest and the prize when most within reach.

Prof. Browne whilst fully recognising the *Shah-Nama* to be a monumental work of national greatness says of "its certain definite and positive defects" that "the similes employed are also as it seems to me *unnecessarily*<sup>2</sup> monotonous; every hero appears as 'a fierce war-seeking lion', 'a crocodile', 'a raging elephant', and the like; and when he moves swiftly he moves 'like smoke', 'like dust', or 'like the wind.' "<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Qu'ran*, VII. 143.

<sup>2</sup> The italics are mine.

<sup>3</sup> Browne E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. II. p. 142.

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But when we remember that it is this very nationalism of Firdawsi—a nationalism that penetrates to the deepest fibres of his heart—that is at work here, and that Firdawsi, glorying in his national pride, is out here deliberately to avoid all alien heroes and alien standards of heroism, then the remarkable appropriateness of the similes begins to dawn. Rustam cannot appear as brave as Khalid; he cannot appear as generous as Hatim Tayyi'; he cannot appear as chivalrous as 'Ali. For apart from the chronological indelicacy which this would involve, there is the ever self-fixed frontier-line of Persia which Firdawsi would never cross. From Firdawsi's point of view, to call Rustam Hercules is to under-estimate Rustam; to call him Hatim of Tayyi' is worse: it is to honour Arabia at the expense of Persia. That Firdawsi would never do. He thought that an ignominy and shame beneath the political downfall of Persia.

Therefore, to paint the Persian warrior without the remotest, the faintest allusion to any doughty foreigner, he had perforce to fall back upon drawing similes from either Persia herself or from nature. The first alternative was impracticable, for the semi-mythical Rustam was the earliest hero of Iran and chronological restrictions could not permit him to be assessed in terms of his later compatriots. Hence, by a process of

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*reductio ad absurdum* we arrive at the latter alternative—which no doubt Firdawsi reached directly though perhaps unconsciously—the portrayal of Persia and Persia's sons, when indigenous comparisons were not available, by similes taken directly from nature.

کمان را بالید رسم بچنگ بغرید مانند غران بنگ

Rustam rubbed the bow with his hand and roared like a roaring panther.

فرو آرد از ابر پران عقاب نتابد به تند یرو آفتاب

He (Sohrab) shall bring down the flying eagle from the clouds;  
nor shall the sun equal him in swiftmess.

Rustam is not made to roar like Bilaal, whose powerful voice is proverbial, but like the panther which roams over the Persian wilds; nor does Sohrab race like Ladas, or Shanfara of Azd, or even like the ostrich which is most swift of foot, but like the sun, which though not exclusively Persian is also not Arabian. Firdawsi eliminated from his *Shah-Nama* Arabic heroes even more than he did Arabic words.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The percentage of these according to the determination of Prof. Browne runs to units; that of Arab heroes barely to decimals.

## The Poetry of Firdawsi

None the less, as even the most ardent admirer of the *Shah-Nama* will probably concede, Firdawsi's similes are not so subtle, elegant, or ingenious, as those of Hafiz or of Sa'di. They are not lacking in impressiveness. Indeed, when they follow in quick succession the grandeur is that of the timed booming of salvoes, as in this sample,

بتن ژنده پیل و بجان جبرئیل      بکف ابر بهن بدل رود نیل

<sup>1</sup> In body (like) a rogue elephant; in spirit (like) Gabriel;  
in hand (like) the cloud (of the month) of Bahman;  
in heart like the River Nile."<sup>1</sup>

or of bursting rockets, as in this passage culled from the episode of Sohrab and Rustam,

که دارم یکی کره رخشش نژاد      برقتن چو تیر و بیویه چو باد  
بزور و برقتن بکردار هور      ندیدست کس همچنان نیز بور  
ز زخم سمش گاو ماهی منوه      بجستن چو برق و بهیکل چو کوه  
یکی کره چون کوه و وادی سپر      لصجرا بپوید چو مرغی پیر  
بکه بر دونده بسان کلاغ      بدریا بکردار ماهی و ماغ  
بصحرا رود همچو تیر از کمان      رسد چون شود از پی بد گمان

(He said) I have a colt of Raksh's pedigree: in speed like an arrow; in flight like the wind.

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<sup>1</sup> Hand and heart are compared, in the Orient, to the cloud and the sea, for profusion and generosity.



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None has ever seen such a swift foal : in speed and in  
charge like the sun.

The celestial bull is in terror of its hoof's hurt : in flight  
like lightning ; in form like the mountain.

A foal that takes the mountain and the valley alike : and  
clears the plain like a bird on the wing.

And the mountain like a raven, and the sea like a fish or  
a cormorant.

That darts over the plain like an arrow from a bow, and  
reaches the quarry the moment it starts.

or of a steady shower of shooting stars, as in the  
delicate presentment of Rudabe,

پس پرده او یکی دختر است  
که رویش ز خورشید روشن تر است  
زمر تا بپایش بکردار عاج  
برخ چون بهار و بیالا چو صاج  
بر آن سفت صیمن دوشکین کند  
سرش گشته چون حلقه پای بند  
رخانش چو گلزار و لب ناروان  
ز صیمن برش رسته دوانردان  
صوچشمش بسان دو برگس بیاض  
مژه نیرنگی برده از پر زاغ  
دو ابرو بسان کمان طراز  
برو تو ز پوشیده از مشک ناز

*The Poetry of Firdausi*

آگر ماه جوی همه روی اوست  
و گرمشك بوی همه بوی اوست  
مرزلف و جمدش چو مشکین زره  
فگنده است گوی گره بر گره  
ده انگشت بر سان سیمین قلم  
برو کرده از غایبه صد رقم  
بهشتی است مرنا مر آراسته  
پر آرایش و رامش و خواسته

Behind the curtain, there is a damsel, whose face is brighter  
than the sun.

From head to foot she is like ivory: in feature like spring; in  
stature like the elm.

On her silver shoulders two musk-laden nooses<sup>1</sup>: her head  
like unto links of fetters.

Her cheeks like pomegranate flowers; lips like fire; from her  
silver-bosom there sprout two pomegranate-buds.

Her two eyes like two narcissi in a garden; the eye-lashes  
have stolen the black of the raven's wing.

Her two eye-brows like bows of Taraz, painted with musk  
like the papyrus-bark<sup>2</sup> on bows.

If thou dost desire the moon, there is her face; if thou  
wouldst inhale musk, there is her fragrance.

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<sup>1</sup> Nooses i. e. ringlets in which the hearts of lovers are en-  
snared.

<sup>2</sup> The papyrus bark used to be wrapped round bows to make  
them smooth.

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Her tresses and locks are like an amber-scented coat-of-mail,  
links linked with links, as one might say.

Her ten fingers are like silver pens, painted and perfumed in  
a hundred art-patterns.

She is an angel form clothed from head to foot in fragrance,  
clinging robe, and jewellery.

or of a heavy cannonade, as in the satire on Sultan  
Mahmud, where the continued metaphor has the  
slow but deadly sweep of the long-range gun.

سر نا مزایان بر افراشتن	وز ایشان امید بیهی داشتن
سر رشته خویش گم کردن است	بیب اندران مار پروردن است
درختی که تلخ است ویرا مرشت	گوش در نشانی بیاغ بهشت
وراز جوی خلدش بهنگام آب	به بیخ انگبین ریزی و شهد ناب
سر انجام گوهر بکار آورد	همان میوه تلخ بار آورد
به عذر فروشان اگر بگزری	شود جامه تو همه عنبری
وگر تو شوی نزد انگشت گر	ازو جز سیاهی نیایی دگر
زبد گوهران بد نباشد عجب	نشاید ستودن سیاهی زشب
ز ناپاک زاده مدارید امید	که زانگی بستن نگرود سفید
زبد اصل چشم بیهی داشتن	بود خاک دردیده انباشتن

To exalt the unworthy and entertain hopes from them

Is to lose the clue to your welfare, and nurture a serpent in  
your bosom.

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The evil tree will retain its evil nature, even if you plant it in Paradise,

And, instead of water, supply its roots with pure honey from Elysian streams.

It will transform all noble substance to itself and bring forth finally a bitter fruit.

If you pass by ambergris-perfumers, your garments will smell as sweet as ambergris.

But if you pass by a charcoal-dealer, nothing will you acquire from save blackness.

An evil return is not strange from evil people; as blackness is inseparable from night.

Entertain not hopes from the man of ignoble birth; because washing maketh not the Ethiopian white.

To hope for good from a base-born wretch is to cast dust in your own eyes.

But such instances, though common, are not plentiful; for the sky never sufficiently clears to give Rustam's sword a chance "to make lightnings in the splendour of the moon,"

برآهیت رستم یکی تیغ تیز      بدان تا نماید بدو رستخیز  
همینواست از تن مرش را برید      ز گرد سپاه این مرآن رانید

Then Rustam drew forth a sharp sword, that he may guide him to his doom.

He wanted to sever his (adversary's) head from his trunk, but owing to the dust of the battlefield they did not see each other.

or his voice to rise above the lion's roar or the heaven's thunder :

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خروشی برآمد بگردار رعد      ازین روی دستم وز آزوی سعد  
خروشی برآمد ز رستم چو رعد      یکی تیغ زد بر سر اسب سعد

Rustam roared like thunder; thunder-like roared Sa'd.

Rustam roared like thunder; and struck Sa'd's charger with his sword.

Qadisiyya is mute when set against Flodden.

And such a yell was there  
Of sudden and portentous birth  
As if men fought upon the earth  
And fiends in upper air.  
Oh! life and death were in the shout,  
Recoil and rally, charge and rout,  
And triumph and despair.

The painted picture to move; the carved marble to speak. There lies the crux of literary art.

The dual of Rustam I and Ashkboos is considered one of the most magnificent passages in the *Shah-Nama*. It is read in every Persian home; declaimed from every Persian pulpit; carried in every Persian bosom. Its popularity is due not so much to the national victory it celebrates, or the martial vigour of its verse, as to the marvellous wealth of detail which as Shibli-i-Nu'mani has pointed out is one of the chief merits of the *Shah-Nama*.<sup>1</sup>

This is how Rustam draws a good long bow at Ashkboos.

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<sup>1</sup> Shibli-i-Nu'mani, *Shi'ru'l 'Ajam*, p. 240, et seq.

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بفرید مانند غراف بانگ	کان را بالید رستم بچنگ
گزین کرد یک چوبه تیر خدنگ	پس آنگه به بند کمر برد چنگ
نهاده براو چار پر عقاب	خدنگی برآورد پیکان چو آب
به چرم گوزن اندر آورد شست	بالید چاچی کان را بدست
خروش از خم چرخ چاچی بخواست	سگون ارد چپ را و خم کرد راست
ز چرم گوزن برآمد خروش	چو سوارش آمد به پهنای گوش
گزر کرد از مهره پشت او	چو پیکان پیوسید انگشت او
سپهر آژمان دست او داد بوس	چو زد تیر بر سنبه اشکبوس
فلک گفت احسن ملک گفت زه	قضا گفت گیر و قدر گفت ده
تو گفתי که او خود ز مادر نژاد	کشانی هم اندر زمان جان بداد

Rustam rubbed the bow all over with his hand and roared like a roaring panther.

Thereafter to his quiver-belt he moved his hand, and selected an arrow of white poplar.<sup>1</sup>

The arrow had a point brilliant like the sheen of metal; and on it were four feathers of the eagle.

Rustam rubbed the Chachi-bow with his hand, inserted his thumb in the elk-leather,

Made a pillar of the left hand and bent the right; the Chachi-bow creaked as it bent.

When the arrow-head came up to the ear, the elk-leather began to squeak.

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<sup>1</sup> Bows and arrows were made of white poplar.

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As soon as the arrow-point lost touch with his fingers, it passed through the back-bone of Ashkboos.

When the arrow hit the breast of Ashkboos, that very moment the Heavens kissed Rustam's hand.

Fate said, "Receive!"; and Death said, "Inflict!"; the Heavens said, "Bravo!", and the Angels, "Well-done!"

That very moment Ashkboos gave up the ghost: thou wouldst say his mother had never borne him.

There is here abundant material for the eye. We are offered not one but a series of photographic prints distinct and delicate, and as the poet's hand passes them rapidly to us, the eye sees and the mind surveys, till the barriers of time are broken and the dead rise from their graves to take the field and fight their battle over again. We may ourselves have been the spectators of this great archery feat; indeed the illusion is that we have been.

The consciousness, however, soon begins to grow that we are after all not in a world of nature. Firdawsi has lifted us out of the world of sound and transported us to an art-gallery where the eye is being made to feast while the ear starves. Ashkboos gives one shriek and is in the thick of the fight.

دلیری که بد نام او اشکبوس      همی بر خروشید بران کوس  
تد آویخت رحام با اشکبوس      برآمد رهر دو سپه بوق و کوس

## *The Poetry of Firdawsi*

The intrepid Ashkboos roared like a war-drum.

Rahham then set upon Ashkboos; from each army resounded  
the trumpet and drum.

and when Rustam has slain him, he falls without  
a moan.

کسانی م اندر زمان جان بداد      تو گفتی که او خود ز مادر نژاد

That very moment Ashkboos gave up the ghost; thou wouldst  
say his mother had never borne him.

Ashkboos could not have been made to die otherwise. Rustam's skill as an archer—and on this the eye is fixed—is imperilled if Ashkboos does not die instantly, and therefore silently. And so the ear is sacrificed to the eye. The sound-effect, however, is not altogether eliminated. Most ingeniously, the angelic host, supposed interested observers of the contest, are made to blare applause from above; and the "well-dones" and "deal-outs" that rain and ring from Heaven do certainly constitute an ear-study. But Firdawsi has seldom studied sound, as he has mastered movement. His *Shah-Nama* is a photo-album. Perhaps more—a cinema-film. But like the film its eloquence is dumb. The action has been truly preserved but the voice is lost.

Herein, indeed, lies the most palpable defect of the *Shah-Nama*. In the entire work, there is



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not one figure, male or female, human, daemonic or celestial, fully portrayed. Several thousand couplets, for example, are dedicated to the legendary warrior Rustam, and the most trivial minutiae of him are recorded—but of his voice there is no mention whatever. He “speaks” or he “roars” as the occasion demands, and from this we are to gather what opinion we may about the pitch of his voice, its intensity, or its timbre. The delicate portraiture of Rudabe or of Tahmine is a perfect word-photograph.

پس بنده اندر یکی مامروی	چو خورشید تابان بر از رنگوبوی
دو ابرو کمان و دو گیسو کند	یدالا بکردار سرو بلند
دو برگ گلش خوسن می مرشت	دو شمشاد عنبر فروش از بهشت
بنا گوش تابنده خورشید وار	فرو هشته زو حلقه گرشوار
لبان از طبرزد زبان از مکر	دهانش مکال به در و گهر
ستاره نهان کرده زیر عقیق	نو گفنی و را زهره آمد رفیق
روانش خرد بود و تن جان پاک	نو گفنی که بهره ندارد ز خاک
چنین داد پاسخ که تهیینه ام	.....

Behind the attendant (was) a moon-faced beauty, shining like the sun, and full of fragrance and colour.

Her two eye-brows (were like) bows ; her two tresses (like) nooses ; in stature (like) the tall cypress.

## The Poetry of Firdawsi

Her two rose-petals were kneaded with lilies<sup>1</sup>: two amber-selling box-trees<sup>2</sup> from Paradise.

The ear-lobes shining like the sun ; and ear-drops pendants therefrom.

Her lips of sugar-candy, her tongue of sugar ; her mouth set with pearls,

Stars concealed within rubies<sup>3</sup>; thou wouldst think she was the companion to Venus.

Her soul was bright ; and pure her mind and body ; thou wouldst say there was nothing earthly about her.

She made reply, 'I am Tahmine' .....

does not incorporate the quality of her voice, although, as Shaikh Sa'di says,

به از روی زیباست آواز خوش  
که این حظ نفس است و آن قوت روح

More welcome than a pretty face is a sweet voice ; for that pleases the bodily senses and this nourishes the soul.

The poet who commands only the bare word  
خروشید (to emit sound) for the creaking of a bow,

ستون کرد چپ را و خم کرد راست  
خروش از خم چرخ چاچی بخواست

He made a pillar of the left hand and bent the right; the Chachi bow creaked as it bent.

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<sup>1</sup> Alluding to the red and white colour of her cheeks.

<sup>2</sup> I do not understand this hemistich : probably Tahmine and her attendant are compared in stature to box-trees, and their intensely perfumed hair to the perfume of ambergris-vendors.

<sup>3</sup> The "stars" are the teeth, and the "rubies" are the lips.

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the *squeaking* of leather,

چو سوزارش آمد به پنهانی گوش ز چرم گوزنان بر آمد خروش

When its arrow-head came up to the ear, the elk-leather *squeaked*.

the *roaring* of drums,

شب آمد چو اهریمن کینه خواه خروش جرس خواست از بارگاه

Like a vindictive Ahriman<sup>1</sup> the night came on ; from the royal palace arose the *roar* of drums.

the *pealing* of thunder,<sup>2</sup>

یکی بعد و باران با برق و جوش زمین پر ز آب آسمان پر خروش

Thunder and rain with lightning and tempest; full of water the earth and the heavens *pealing* with thunder.

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<sup>1</sup> Ahriman is the Evil Spirit.

<sup>2</sup> It is in the *cooing* of ringdoves, the غمغمه قمری of Hafiz,

غمغمه قمری ارغماند رواست قلقل شیشه شراب یار

If the *cooing* of ringdoves has ceased, it does not matter ; bring the effervescence of the wine-bottle.

or in the *singing* of nightingales, the غمغمه بلبل of Nidhami,

اگر در باغ بخرامد دو صد غمغمه بر انگیزد  
چه غمغمه ؟ غمغمه بلبل چه بلبل ؟ بلبل شیدا

Were she to walk in the garden there would arise a chorus of two hundred *songs*. What *songs* ? The *songs* of the nightingales. What nightingales ? The nightingales love-lorn.

that Firdawsi discovers a definite word غمغمه (the *chorus singing* of birds) to express a thunder-clap or *peal*.

بر از غمغمه رعد شد کوهسار بر از نوگس ولاله شد جویبار

The mountains resonant with *peals* of thunder ; the valleys overgrown with narcissi and tulips.

the *blowing* of trumpets,

برآمد خرویدن کاو دم      دم نای سرغین و روئینه خم

There arose a din as the trumpets *blew* and the Turkish pipes  
and the brass-drums sounded.

and *screaming and wailing*,

خروشی برآمد ز رهبان به درد      که ای تاجور شاه آزاد مرد

The priest *wailed*, "O noble, crowned King!"

*shouting and yelling*,

خرویدن کای مرد جنگ آزمای      هم آوردت آمد مرو باز ز جای

And *yelled*, "Ay, fellow that dost desire the battle's decision;  
thy rival has come; move not from thy place."

and even for the *crash* of boulders,

فرمان یزدان مرخفه مرد      خرویدن سنگ بیدار کرد

By the will of God, the *crash* of the boulder awakened the sleeper.

is no specialist in acoustics.

Facial and not vocal beauty captures the hearts of Firdawsi's heroes—at best imperfect connoisseurs of beauty, strangely indifferent to the peculiar attraction of the "mellow voice"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tennyson: *Lancelot and Elaine*.

The lily maid Elaine,  
Won by the *mellow voice* before she looked,  
Lifted her eyes and read his lineaments.

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which can win Love more potently than the graceful contour of face and figure.

The poverty of sound-vocabulary goes hand in hand with the process of sound-synthesis. No details therefore of Rustam's voice, for example, or Rudabe's are given. Synthesis, however, though applied to sound is not pursued by Firdawsi elsewhere. His poetry indicates that his special gift lay in analysis. As a painter, he works on every detail of form and feature; as a historian, he elucidates the most commonplace incident; as a warrior, he indicates how the hand, foot, and eye should be held. And while he thus dissects the whole human frame with the skill of an expert anatomist, he suddenly drops his lancet when he comes to operate on the larynx.

It is all the more remarkable then to watch how Firdawsi has "brought off" in his *Shah-Nama* that "sonorous majesty" for which he is rightly applauded. Consider this passage :

یکی نامه فرمود نزدیک سام	مرامر درود و نوید و خرام
نخست از جهان آفرین یاد کرد	که هم داد فرمود و هم داد کرد
وزو باد برسام نیرم درود	خداوند شمشیر و گویال و خود
چنانده چرمه هنگام گرد	چراننده کرگس اندر نبرد

فزاينده باد آورد گاه      فشاننده خونت ز ابرسيه  
 بردی هنر در هنر ساخته      مرش از هنر گردن افراخته

Then to Sam straightway sent he a letter  
 Filled with fair praises, prayers, and good greeting.  
 First made he mention of the World-Maker  
 Who doom dispenseth and doom fulfilleth.  
 "On Niram's son Sam," wrote he, "the sword-lord,  
 Mail-clad and mace-girt, may the Lord's peace rest!"  
 Hurler of horse-troops in hot contested fights,  
 Feeder of carrion-fowls with foemen's flesh-feast,  
 Raising the roar of strife on the red war-field,  
 From the grim war-clouds grinding the gore-shower,  
 Who by his manly might, merit on merit  
 Heaps, till his merit merit outmeasures.

Repetition and double repetition,

هنر در هنر      مراسر      هم داد فرمود و هم داد کرد  
 alliteration,

چنانده چرمه      باد بر      خداوند خود

the felicitous introduction of words agreeing in measure and rhyme, the heroic metre of the verse which induces its extraordinary rapidity of movement,<sup>2</sup> and its singularly chaste style abounding in monosyllabic and dissyllabic words (as هم داد فرمود و هم داد کرد) have together conferred

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Shah-Nama*, the rapidity of movement is characteristic both of the verse to which allusion is here made and of the "flat intervals," q. v. e.

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on the *Shah-Nama* the resonance associated with hollow rocks when filled with the sound of blustering winds. I am inclined to believe that an over-concentration on developing this sonorous majesty has been the chief factor in impoverishing Firdawsi's musical sensibility.

Consider, for example, this passage from the duel between Rustam and Ashkboos both of whom we have met before and come to know.

کمان را به بازو به زه برفکـند      به بند کمر بر یزدنیر چند  
یکی تیر در دست رنگ آبنوس      خرامید و آمد بر اشکبوس

He slung the bow and the bow-string on his arm ; and stuck some arrows in his waist-belt.

In his hand, an arrow of ebony colour. Haughtily he marched and came up to Ashkboos.

Mark how the poet lingers over Rustam's careful preparation for the combat : the bow slung over the shoulder and easily accessible, the bowstring fixed and tested ; the spare supply of arrows in the belt-quiver and the selected arrow in the hand ready for immediate discharge. The picture pulsates with visible life : and that arrow in the hand of Rustam, like the sister plume in the hand of Firdawsi, which course will it take ? Strike Ashkboos on his charger or the Arab on his throne ?

After the preliminary delay comes the swift flight—not of the arrow but of the archer. His march is as swift as his arrow's flight. Before we know where he is, we find him face to face with his quarry. This rapidity of movement in the transitional passages is as noteworthy as the rapidity of movement of the verse. Almost always we find "the flat intervals—the dull gaps of narrative—hurried over in this way,"<sup>1</sup> which according to Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch,<sup>2</sup> constitutes "the capital difficulty of verse." Firdawsi, however, does not only "hurry over" the flat intervals; when he meets them, he wears Seven-League Boots and takes them with a stride.

But to proceed :

خروشید کای مرد جنگ آزمای هم آوردت آمد مرو باز زجای  
کشانی بخندید و خیره بماند غنان را گران کرد و او را بخواند  
بدو گفت خندان که نام تو چیست تن یسرت را که خواهد گریست  
تهمن بدو گفت که ای شوم تن چه پرستی تو نام درین انجمن  
مرا مام من نام مرگ تو کرد زمانه مرا پتک ترک تو کرد

And bellowed, "Ay, fellow that dost desire the battle's decision,  
thy rival has come ; move not from thy place."

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<sup>1</sup> Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch: *The Art of Reading*, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch : *The Art of Writing*, especially the chapter, *The Capital Difficulty of Verse*.



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Ashkboos laughed and was amazed ;- tightened his reins and called to him.

And said with laughter, "What is thy name ? Who is to weep over thy headless trunk ?"

To him did Rustam reply, "O miserable wretch, why dost thou ask my name in this meeting-place ?

Me, my mamma has named "THY DEATH" ; the world has made my battle-club thy helmet."

Notice especially the last intensely alliterative line, for it forms the crest of the argument. A warrior contemptuously ridiculed on the battle-field for his stupid audacity in confronting a champion like Ashkboos, does not begin—like a school-boy in a class-room—to lisp in soft labials

مرا مام من نام مرگ تو کرد

Me, my mamma<sup>1</sup> has named "THY DEATH."

as Firdawsi would have us believe. Infantile lisp-  
ing is bad enough in a class-room; in the mouth  
of an irritated Rustam, it is thrice condemnable;  
for it dishonours him as a warrior as much  
as it discredits the poet whether as artist or  
psychologist.

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<sup>1</sup> The Persian مام, pronounced *mam*, signifies *mamma*, not *mother*.

II

"When I write a scene," said Legouv   to Scribe, "I hear ; but you see. In each phrase which I write, the voice of the personage who speaks strikes my ear. *Vous, qui  tes le th  tre m me*, your actors walk, gesticulate before your eyes; I am a listener, you a spectator." "Nothing more true," said Scribe. "Do you know where I am when I write a piece ? In the middle of the parterre."<sup>1</sup>

Firdawsi might well have been the speaker. In his marvellous faculty for visual images he equalled Shakespeare or Milton; in his perception of motor images he surpassed them almost as much as he declined from them in the feebleness of his sound-perception.

Nowhere are these gifts, with their attendant drawback, more clearly displayed than in Firdawsi's tragedies. Here is his description of sorrow-stricken Tahmine, when tidings are brought of Sohrab's death.

خروشيد و جوشيد و جامه دريد      به زاري برآن كودك نار سيد  
بر آورد بانگ و غريو و خروش      زمان تا زمان زو ممي رفت هوش

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<sup>1</sup> William James : *Principles of Psychology*, vol. II. p. 60.

فرو برد ناخن دودیده بکـند      بر آورد و بالا در آتش فکند  
 مرآن زلف چون تاب داد کـند      به انگشت پیچید و از بن بکند  
 به سر بر فکند آتش و بر فروخت      همه موی مشکین به آتش بسوخت  
 همی گفت کای جان مادر کـزون      کجائی سرشته بخاک و بخون  
 دو چشم به ره بود گفتم مگر      ز سهراب و رستم بیام خبر  
 چه دانستم ای پور کاید خبر      که رستم به خنجر در بدت جگر  
 در بغش نیامد از آن روی تو      از آت برز و بالا و بازوی تو  
 پیورده بودم نقش را به ناز      به رخشنده روز و شبان دراز  
 کون آن بخون اندرون غرقه گشت      کفن برتن پاک او خرقه گشت  
 کون من کرا گیرم اندر کنار      که خواهد بدن مرا غمگسار  
 پدر جستی ای گرد لشکر پناه      به جی پدر گورت آمد براه  
 چرا نامدم با تو اندر سفر      که گشتی به گردان گیتی سمر  
 مرا رستم از دور بشناختی      تو با من ای پور بنواختی  
 بینداختی تیغ آن سر فراز      نکردی جگر گاهت ای پور باز  
 همی گفت و میخست و می کدوی      همیزد کف دست بر خوب روی  
 زخون او همی کرد لعل آب را      به پیشش آورد اسپ سهراب را  
 سراپ او به بر در گرفت      بمانده جهانی در او در شکفت

## *The Poetry of Firdawsi*

زخون زیرممش همی راند جوی گرفتش چه فرزند اندر کنار همت نیزه و تیغ و گرز گران همی باد کرد آن بر و برز را لگام و سپر را همی زد بسر	گهی بوسه زد بر سرش گه بروی بیاورد آن جامه شـاهوار بیاورد خنقان و درع و کبان بسر بر همی زد گران گرز را بیاورد زین و لگام و سپر
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**She** screamed, and raved, and rent her garments in lamentation over that unblossomed youth.

**She** sobbed, and wailed, and shouted, and fainted again and again.

**She** thrust her nails (into her eyes) and pulled out her eyes ; she upraised her stature and threw herself into fire.

**And** those tresses of hers—like a noose—she clutched with her fingers and tore them from their roots.

**She** threw fire over her head and let it flame ; and burnt her musk-like hair.

**And** said, "Oh thou, that wert thy mother's life, where art thou now ? Mingled in blood and earth.

**My** two eyes were ever on thy way and I thought, 'Perhaps of Sohrab and Rustam news will come.'

**Was** I to know, O son, the news would be : 'Rustam's dagger has pierced thy heart ?'

**Was** he not rebuked by that face of thine ? By that stature, height, and arm of thine ?

**I** had nourished thy body caressingly, the bright day long and the long night.

**That** now is drenched in gore ; on thy lovely figure the shirt hath become the shroud.

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Whom now shall I take within my embrace ? Who now shall  
become my comforter ?

A father didst thou seek, O army-defending warrior ; in thy  
father's stead, the grave came (to meet thee) on thy way.

Why did I not accompany thee on thy journey ? I would have  
made thee known among the champions of the world.

Rustam would have known me from afar, and I, being with thee,  
would have treated thee lovingly.

The haughty chieftain would have flung away his dagger ;  
and not ripped thy heart, my son."

Thus she spoke,<sup>1</sup> and wailed, and tore her hair ; and smote her  
lovely face with the palms of her hands.

She made her tears rubies with her blood, and brought before  
her the battle-steed of Sohrab.

She took the horse's head to her bosom—while a world (of  
people) looked at her wonderingly.

Its head now she kissed, now its face ; and watered its hoofs  
with rivers of blood.

She brought the royal garment (of Sohrab) and embraced it  
as if it had been her son.

She brought his cuirass, armour, and bow ; his spear, his sword,  
and his heavy mace.

With the heavy mace smote she her head, and called that  
(noble) form and figure to mind.

She brought his saddle, rein, and shield ; with the shield and  
rein smote she her head.

The passage starts with an auditory image  
The very first act of Tahmine is to shout and wail

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<sup>1</sup> Literally, pierced ; *i. e.* her speech pierced the hearts of  
listeners.

then she goes mad, weeps, and tears her hair.  
The loud detonations,

خروشید و جوشید و جامه درید

She screamed, and raved, and rent her garments.

بر آورد بانگ و غریو و خروش

She sobbed, and wailed, and shouted, and fainted again  
and again.

audible in the opening lines, have so spent themselves that they recur no more. When the plaintive soliloquy ends, only the bodily convulsions continue amidst a torrent of tears.

همی گفت و می خست و می کند موی

همی زد کف دست بر خوب روی

ز خون او همی کرد لعل آب را

به پیش آورد اسب سهراب را

Thus she spoke, and wailed, and tore her hair ; and smote  
her lovely face with the palms of her hand.

She made her tears rubies with her blood, and brought before  
her the battle-steed of Sohrab.

بسر بر همی زد گران گرز را      همی یاد کرد آن بروبرز را  
بیآورد زین و اسگام و میز      لگام و میز را همی زد بر

With the heavy mace smote she her head, and called that  
(noble) form and figure to mind.

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She brought his saddle, rein, and shield ; with the shield and  
rein smote she her head.

This then is Firdawsi's account of Tahmine. A moving picture of violent mania ! Also an example of artistic ingenuity ! How completely has Firdawsi shifted from auditory to motor imagery—his own speciality.

Let us set against this passage from the *Shah-Nama* the last scene of *King Lear*. Both are excellent examples of tragic art—the concentration of emotional impulse, in each case paroxysmal. The difference between them is not so much of epic and dramatic poetry, of rhymed and blank verse—great as that difference is; and great as it is to the advantage of Shakespeare—as of artistry.

Howl, howl, howl, howl ! O you are men of stones;  
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
That Heaven's vault should crack.

is a perfect masterpiece of sound-imagery. The first wail alone is frantic enough to crack the universe. But, as we proceed,

Cordelia, Cordelia ! Stay a little. Ha !  
What is it thou say'st ? Her voice was ever soft  
Gentle and low—an excellent thing in woman,

a miracle has happened. The too-too-solid flesh has begun to melt. The wild words come again,

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no, no, no, no, life

thawing and dissolving us ; and as they rise,  
higher and wilder yet, to the pitch of maddened  
disillusion,

Thou'lt come no more,  
Never, never, never, never, never !

there is nothing of us left save our own sorrow.

Only an audile can be a great tragedian. Firdawsi's insensitiveness to sound would have made a tragedy of his tragedies, even if he had not to labour under the disadvantage of the heroic metre of the *Shah-Nama*, which is as unfit for a threnody as it is fit for a war-song. The long, protracted, heavy utterances of grief cannot accomodate themselves to *mutaqarib* metre ; intensely emotional words like *وداع فراق دريغ* require consecutive duplication to be effective,<sup>1</sup> but this was impossible in the *Shah-Nama* for metrical reasons. None can deny the pathos in the episode of Sohrab and Rustam : the warrior-son still seeking the elusive father ; the grief-stricken mother still persuading her impatient son to wait at home ; the delicate conflict between

<sup>1</sup>Nicholson, R. A. *Divani Shams Tabriz*, p. 99.



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Sohrab's love for Rustam and for Tahmine ; the struggle between intuition and pride ; the vain scruples of Rustam to preserve his incognito, leading to his son's death ; the sad disclosure when death had drawn its veil. The concentration of emotional impulse is indeed there, but its presentment is weak.

Let us consider the first two lines of the passage again :

خروشید و جوشید و جامه درید      به زاری بر آن کودک نارسید  
بر آورد بانگ و غریو و خروش      زمان تا زمان زو می رفت هوشر

She screamed, and raved, and rent her garments in lamentation over that unblossomed youth.

She sobbed, and wailed, and shouted, and fainted again and again.

There are here two couplets, making four hemistichs. The paroxysmal grief in the first and third hemistichs is indistinguishable from rage: shouting, howling, roaring, and the tearing of clothes being the usual concomitants of anger. In the second hemistich of the first couplet, therefore, Firdawsi has to state, to prevent ambiguity, that this outburst was actually provoked by grief—'به زاری' 'in lamentation.' Likewise in the second hemistich of the second couplet the fainting is intentionally introduced—

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زمان تا زمان زوهمي رفت موش

She fainted again and again.

to differentiate grief from rage, fainting being the culminating feature of grief and utterly alien to rage. The poet is thus compelled to label his emotions to differentiate them. That may be psychological perfection, but it surely is not the height of aesthetic art.

Where there has been such crude emotional differentiation, to look for emotional shading is obviously futile. To take grief again, for we have already studied it at some length, one is curious to know how Firdawsi has painted its phases. How does grief affect women? How does it affect men? How does it, how should it affect a warrior?

All this, however, is a cry in the wilderness. We have already had an account of Tahmine's mourning. Rustam's is identical. One is the mirror-image of the other. The tragedy of Sohrab affects them alike : both weep, both wail ; both tear their hair, and rend their garments; both throw ashes on their heads, and beat their breasts almost as if the one had studied the other. The congruency extends even to the language.

## TAHMINE

خروشید و جوشید و جامه درید. نزاری بر آن کودک نارید  
 She screamed and raved and rent her garments in  
 lamentation over that unblossomed youth.

همی گفت و میخست و می کند موی همی زد کف دست و بزخوب روی  
 Thus she spoke and wailed and tore her hair; and  
 smote her lovely face with the palms of her  
 hands.

کهی بوسه زد بر سرش که بروی  
 زخون زیر منش همی راند جوی

Its head now she kissed, now its face; and watered  
 its hoofs with rivers of blood.

درخش نیامد از آن روی تو از آن برز و بالا و بازوی تو  
 Was he not rebuked by that face of thine? By  
 that stature, height, and arm of thine?

## RUSTAM

زید نره و خونش آمد بجوش همی کند موی و همی زد خروش  
 He yelled and his blood surged in him. *He tore his  
 hair* and screamed.

چو بشنید رسم خراشید روی همی زد بسینه همی کند موی  
 When Rustam heard (the news) he scratched his  
 face; and smote his breast and *tore his hair*.

همی ریخت خوند و همی کند موی سرش بر زخاک و بر از آب روی  
 همی ریخت خوند و همی کند خاک رفت جامه خسروی کرد جاک  
 He wept blood and *tore his hair*: ashes on his  
 head and tears in his eyes.

He wept blood and threw ashes; and tore his  
 royal robes asunder.

دربغ آن همه سردی و رای تو دربغ آن رخ و برز و بالای تو  
 Alas, that mind and body of thine! Alas, that face  
 and height and stature of thine!

Notice, further, the stress laid on hair-tearing. It occurs in no less than three couplets of the five here given. That certainly is not the most salient feature of manly grief. Why then is it introduced? We revert to what we have previously stated, even to the point of weariness. Firdawsi was essentially a visualiser. To paint grief therefore he had to see it; and grief that is well seen is only of the violent type, where the eruptive outbursts express themselves in outward flourishes of the limbs. Hair-tearing thus comes to have a definite purpose. It marks off silent grief from violent, the grief that Firdawsi will not describe from the grief that he will. The sorrow that settles upon the soul, and gnaws at the heart and mind may be more intense. And in proportion to its intensity is its invisibility, and this very invisibility of silent grief has determined its exclusion from the *Shah-Nama*.

III

We have perhaps over-strained our study of sight and sound, for the *Shah-Nama* professes to be not a treatise on optics or acoustics but the *Book of Kings*—a royal title for History and singularly appropriate, for, as we have seen, a monarchical government was ever the only form of government in Persia. Colour, form, and motion is indeed there—but not exclusively, not even primarily. For the artistic beauty of the *Shah-Nama* is but its physical beauty—a mere accessory of its spiritual beauty, the beauty of Truth.

The combination of strong and genuine nationalism—and Firdawsi's nationalism was both strong and genuine—with a martyr's passion for truth is rare, for the one is hostile to the other. It is Firdawsi's chief distinction that he held the balance between them so even that his patriotism hardly led him to inaccuracy or to impartiality.

This may seem strange for there are undoubted discrepancies in the language of the *Shah-Nama*, which deals sympathetically with the Macedonians and apathetically with the Arabs. Mark the accession of Alexander to the throne of Macedon,

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سکندر بخت نیا بر نشست      بهی جست و دست بدی را به بست

Alexander ascended the throne of his fathers ; sought good and closed his hand against evil.

and especially his chivalrous offer to the dying Darius,

سپارم ترا بادشاهی و تخت      جو بهتر شوی ما بیندیم رخت

I shall hand over the throne and sceptre to you; when you are well again, I shall depart.

and, for a contrast, this caustic for the Arabs,

ز شیر شتر خوردن و سومار      عرب را بجای رسیده است کار  
که تاج کبان را کند آرزو      تقو باد بر چرخ گردون تقو

From feeding on desert lizards, and camel's milk, so have the affairs of the Arabs prospered

That they long for the empire of the Chosroes. Shame on thee,  
O circling Heaven, shame!

The Greeks appear as chivalrous conquerors, the Arabs as base-born plunderers; whereas we would anticipate that both would share the like odium, both being foreign invaders. Naturally therefore the query arises—how is this preferential treatment reconcilable with Firdawsi's impartiality?

Within this seeming contradiction is crystallised Firdawsi's entire political and intellectual outlook.

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The effects of the Macedonian invasion had already been repaired by the rise of Sasanian Persia ; those of the Arab rule were still there and had yet to be annihilated. The Persian revival, welcome as it was, was not the be-all and end-all of Firdawsi's most cherished hopes and fondest imaginings. The Ghaznawide Persia was to him but a phantasm, a hollow mockery, of the great Persia he had in mind. He wished to see Persia as it had been under Shapur and Nushirwan.

Very ingeniously, therefore, Firdawsi based his *Shah-Nama* entirely on the National Legend, and "on the lost Greek text of the Pseudo-Callisthenes." Says Prof. Browne with the satisfaction of a geometrician who has proved his problem :

No one who has read the *Kar-namak* and this portion of the *Shah-nama* side by side can fail to be greatly impressed by the general fidelity, even in minute details, with which the latter reproduces the former; and our opinion of Firdawsi's faithful adherence to genuine old legends is equally strengthened by a comparison of the Pahlawi legend of Zair (*Yalkar-i-zariran*, translated into German by Geiger) with the corresponding part of the *Shah-nama*. Now it is a mere accident that we happen to be able to check these portions by the originals, and we may fairly assume that elsewhere, where we have no such means of control, the poet is equally conscientious in his adherence, even in detail, to ancient legend.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Browne, E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 138.

Now, the National Legend "only begins to run parallel with actual history at the beginning of the Sasanian period."<sup>1</sup> Previous to this, it is unhistorical. As such, it contains a load of curiosities, fables, and legends which, likewise, have found their way to the *Shah-Nama*. But obviously, no liability can attach to Firdawsi for introducing them, because of the corresponding flaws in the National Legend itself. If the National Legend, or rather the romance of the Pseudo-Callisthenes, has nationalised or deified Alexander, how is Firdawsi to be blamed for it?<sup>2</sup> He never assumed the task of converting Legend into History. He undertook to embalm Legend as he found it. He did that and more. He breathed life into the mummy as he himself asserts.

همه مرده از روزگار دراز شد از گفت من نامشان زنده باز  
چو عیسی من این مردگان را تمام مرا سر همه زنده کردم بنام

All dead since ages. By my word, now their names have revived.  
Like Christ, have I called all the dead to life.

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<sup>1</sup> Browne, E. G. *A Lit. Hist. of Persia*, Vol. I. p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Firdawsi follows the romance of the Pseudo-Callisthenes or the National Legend as it suits his purpose. Alexander is a hero in the former, and "the cursed Roman who, self-destroyed, fled to hell" in the latter. Firdawsi's description of Alexander is based on the romance rather than the legend, not because the romance is pro-Alexandrian but because being pro-Alexandrian it is pro-Persian.



The claim may appear extravagant but who that has read the *Shah-Nama* can deny that here again Firdawsi speaks the truth ?

Instances, however, can be cited when Firdawsi has blown hot and cold with the same breath : the prefatory satire in the *Shah-Nama* is a barrage of words ; the introductory dedication a shower of word-confetti. Here are portions of this dedication (A) in a column parallel to another encomium (B) taken from the account of the legendary Kai-Khusraw. Noteworthy is the puerile repetition of thought and language—by no means uncommon in Firdawsi—degenerating here into mere duplication.

A

بدین نامه من دست کردم دراز

بنام شهنشاه گزردن فزاد

B

که این نامه بر نام شاه جهان

بگویم غلام سخن در زبان

I undertook this work as a dedication to the I declare publicly that I dedicate this work to the

## A

ابوالقاسم آن شاه فیروز بخت نهاد از بر تاج خورشید تخت  
جهاندار محمود شاه بزرگ به آبخور آدمی میش و کرک

Abul-Qasim, that king of auspicious fortune, who  
has placed his throne above the dais of the Sun.  
The Lord of the World, Mahmud, the great King who  
makes the ram and the wolf drink from one pool.

جهاندار پروز پیدار بخت خداوند تاج و خداوند تخت  
نه کند آوری کرد از تاج و گنج نه دل تیره دارد ز رزم و زرنج

The Lord of the Crown, and the Lord of the Throne ;  
the Lord of the World, auspicious, and of  
vigilant fortune.

Whom the Throne and Treasure maketh not  
haughty ; nor war and fatigue dejected.

## B

ابوالقاسم آن شهریار دلیر یکا کورستاند از چنگ شبر  
جهاندار محمود کاندو نبرد سر سرکشان اندر آرد بگرد

Abul-Qasim, that intrepid King, who dares snatch  
the wild ass from the tiger's paw.

The Lord of the World, Mahmud, who in war brings  
the heads of the contumacious down to the earth.

خداوند تاج و خداوند گنج  
خداوند شمشیر و خنجر و رنج

The Lord of the Crown, and the Lord of Treasure ;  
the Lord of the Sword, and the Cuirass and War.

## A

..... به ایران و توران ورا بنده اند.....

..... ز کسیر تاهیش در پایی چین.....

In Persia and Transoxiana are his vassals.....  
From Kashmir to the Sea of China .....

..... نه ییچد کسی سر ز فرمان اوی نیارد گذشتن ز پیمان اوی

None disobeys his mandate ; none dare break  
his faith.

..... بر آن بخت بیدار و تاج و سنگین

The Blesser blesses him and that vigilant fortune of  
his, and the Crown and Sceptre.

No extenuating pleas can be urged for the wilful indulgence of flattery  
which makes of Sultan Mahmud, as the Romans in their decadence made of

## B

..... خداوند هند و خداوند چین

..... خداوند ایران و توران زمین

The Lord of India and the Lord of China;  
The Lord of Persia and Transoxiana.

..... که یارد گذشتن ز پیمان اوی دگر سر کشیدن ز فرمان اوی

Who dare break his faith ? Or who dare disobey  
his mandate ?

..... که نازد بر او تاج و تخت و نگین

From God come blessings on the King; the Throne,  
Sceptre, and Crown are proud of him.

No extenuating pleas can be urged for the wilful indulgence of flattery  
which makes of Sultan Mahmud, as the Romans in their decadence made of

## *The Poetry of Firdawsi*

their Emperors, an *optimus maximus Jupiter*. Especially despicable is this praise when it emanates from a truthful historian. Is this Firdawsi's critical analysis of History—this, his final verdict?

گواهی دهد در جهان خاک و آب همام بر فلک چشمه آفتاب  
که چون او نبردست مایه ی بخت ندر بخشش و کوشش و نام و انگ

The Earth and Water bear witness in the world, and in the  
Heavens, the stream of solar light,

That a king like him (Mahmud) there has never been, neither  
in war, bounty, vigour, renown, nor repute.

*Et tu, Brute!* That a poet of such lofty spirit as Firdawsi whose *Shah-Nama* is the most astounding compendium of deeds of valour and endurance should not be able to cure himself of his own slavery shows how environment and descent can corrupt even the incorruptible. Plato, as we all know, excluded the poet from his ideal Republic. This novel procedure gave rise to a storm of controversy, still unabated. Plato's proposition, indeed, is too bold for a ballot, few of us having the courage to vote for or against. Let us try therefore the proposal of Socrates. Says he to Adeimantus,

— "Then we shall have to obliterate many obnoxious passages.....And we must beg Homer

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and the other poets not to be angry if we strike out these and similar passages, not because they are unpoetical or unattractive to the popular ear, but because the greater the poetical charm of them the less are they meet for the ears of boys and men who are meant to be free....."

Firdawsi, as we have seen, did mean the boys and men of Persia to be free. But to proceed.

".....Who are meant to be free and who shall fear slavery more than death."

"Undoubtedly," replied Adeimantus,<sup>1</sup>—and that reply has not been questioned to this day.

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Jowett: *Plato's Republic*, Book III, pp. 66—67.

# ***The Poetry of Minuchihri***



## *The Poetry of Minuchihri*

IN 1886 A. de Biberstein Kazimirski published the *diwan* of *Menoutchehri*—Minuchihri-i-Damghani, for as it appears from Prof. Browne's researches, there have been two Minuchihris, "the one of the early Ghaznawide Period, and the other posterior to Anwari,"<sup>1</sup>—with text, translation, introduction, and a copious commentary. This is essentially a monograph based on the lithographed edition of Teheran. In this volume the text occupies about two hundred and twenty loosely-printed pages and is supposed to comprise all the poetical remains of Minuchihri—chiefly *qasidas* with a few insignificant *ghazals* and quatrains. The small bulk of the text is noteworthy, for Persian *diwans* are usually voluminous.

The poet lived during the early Ghaznawide Period. Of his poems, one magnificent ode, with an exordium on a Candle, is dedicated to 'Unsuri, who Dawlatshah says was Sultan Mahmud's poet laureate.

و در آخر سلطان محمود استاد عنصری را مثال ملک الشعراء  
قلمرو خود ارزانی داشت و حکم فرمود که در اطراف ممالک هر کجا  
شاعری و خوش گوی باشد سخن خود را بر استاد عنصری عرضه دارد  
تا استاد غث و سمین آن را منقح ساخته در حضرت اعلیٰ بعرض رساند<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Browne E. G., *Account of a Rare Manuscript History of the*  
s, p. 15.

*Dawlatshah*, ed. Browne E. G., p. 45.



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Finally the Sultan bestowed on 'Unsuri letters patent investing him with the laureateship in his dominions and commanded that wherever, throughout his empire, there might be a poet or writer of elegance, he should submit his productions to 'Unsuri, who after examining its merits and defects should submit it to the Royal Presence.<sup>1</sup>

Two or three odes are consecrated to Prince Minuchir b. Qabus, one to Malik Muhammad-i-Qasri, and others to Ahmad Hasan-i-Maymandi. Ahmad Hasan-i-Maymandi was long Prime Minister to Mahmud until, incurring his sovereign's displeasure, he was confined in the fortress of Kalanjar, according to Firishta, for twelve or thirteen years. Then, on the accession of Sultan Mas'ud he was released and reinstated as premier. Other odes, again, are in honour of Ahmad Abdus Samad the successor in the vizierate to Maymandi, of sundry other noblemen of Mas'ud's court, and of course of Sultan Mas'ud himself.

It is not the presence of these odes, but the absence of many others that should have been in the *diwan* which is remarkable. Minuchihr was not a citizen of Ghazna but of Damghan, and not a subject of Mas'ud but of Minuchihr b. Qabus b. Washmgir, Prince of Tabaristan (died A.D. 1028-9), from whom he derived his pen-name and to whose court he was attached. Now the relations between Prince Minuchihr and Sultan

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

## *The Poetry of Minuchihri*

Mahmud were most cordial, as is borne out by Ibn Isfandiyyar in his *History of Tabaristan* :

Minuchihr made it his first business to conciliate, with presents and professions of loyalty, the powerful Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna who recognised his sovereignty in Gurgan, Tabaristan and Qumish, and sent Abu Muhammad b. Mihran as an ambassador to confer on him a robe of honour and other marks of his favour; while he on his part agreed to pay a yearly tribute of fifty thousand dinars, and, on the occasion of the campaign against Nardin, supplied a contingent of a thousand picked soldiers of Daylam. Later Minuchihr sent Abu Sa'd Sawak, the greatest noble of Gurgan, to Sultan Mahmud to pray that he bestow on him, for the confirmation of the alliance, the hand of one of his daughters. To this request a favourable answer was brought back by the ambassador, who was then sent to Ghazna a second time accompanied by the *qadi* of Gurgan to draw up the marriage-contract and bring back the bride.<sup>1</sup>

Prince Minuchihr died before Sultan Mahmud. As the poet's *diwan* contains no ode on Mahmud, it follows that Minuchihr did not come to Ghazna before 1030 A. D., the date of Mahmud's death. On the other hand, since the poet addresses *qasidas* to the premier, Hasan-i-Maymandi, who died in 1032 A. D., he must have surely arrived at Ghazna before this date. We may therefore assume that the poet migrated to Ghazna in 1031 A. D. This was at the special invitation of Mas'ud himself, as appears from one of the poet's verses:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Isfandiyyar : *History of Tabaristan*. Translation by Prof. E. G. Browne, pp. 233-234.

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خواست از ري خسرو ايراث مرا بر شصت ميل

The King of Persia sent for me from Rayy—at a distance of sixty miles.

Incidentally, this verse refutes the account in the *Majma'-ul-Fusaha*, adopted by Shibli Nu'mani, where 'Unsuri is made out as introducing the poet to Sultan Muhammad, who confers on him the right of access to the king at all times, an old Achæmenian privilege.<sup>1</sup>

بهر حال عنصري فی اسکو دربار شاهی مین پهنجا یا اور  
سلطان محمد بن محمود کی حضور میں ترخانی کا منصب ملا —  
یعنی جب چاہتا دربار میں چلا جاتا — کچھہ روک ٹوک نہ تھی —

Anyway, 'Unsuri introduced him to the Royal Court, and he (Minuchihri) obtained from Sultan Muhammad b. Mahmud,

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<sup>1</sup> Very little in Muhammadan Persia is truly the product of Islam. The privilege of *Tar-khani* ترخانی for example, is merely a revival of an old Achæmenian custom which allowed the heads of the seven great Persian tribes, known as the "Seven Princes," to interview the Great King at all times. It enabled Darius the Great to succeed in assassinating the usurper, Gaumata the Magian, when he was in his inaccessible castle in Media. Again, the court of Sultan Mahmud was, as I have mentioned, *supra*. p. 102, adorned by two thousand Turkish slave-boys bearing golden maces, and a like number bearing silver maces, stationed on the right and left of the throne. The Achæmenian king had a similar bodyguard, "consisting of two thousand cavalry and two thousand infantry whose lances bore gold or silver apples."

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the privilege and honour of *Tar-khani*. He could come and go, to or from the court, as he pleased, without let or hindrance.

Furthermore, the absence of any panegyric on Sultan Muhammad,<sup>1</sup> who honoured a foreigner more than his own countrymen, and the poet's declaration, that since his arrival at Ghazna he has served none but Mas'ud,

تا من درین دیارم مدح کسی نگفتم  
جز آفرین و مدحت زآن شاه و حق گذاری  
جز بر در شهنشه بر در گهی نفتم  
نه بر در حجازی نه بر در بخاری

Since I have been in this country I have praised none save that King and patron.

Save the court of the Emperor I have sought none other—neither the court of Hedjaz, nor the court of Bukhara.

render Shibli's version incredible. The common origin of several Ghaznawide fictions is 'Unsuri's prerogative, bestowed on him by Mahmud, as

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<sup>1</sup> The *qasida* in honour of Malik Muhammad Qasri (see page 122 of the Persian text of Kazimirski's edition) does not contradict this statement. The poet here distinctly speaks of a Muhammad-i-Qasri چون قصر ملک محمد قصری—who, as Kazimirski believes, was secretary and second vizier to Prince Minuchihr and was selected for his appearance to go as ambassador to Mahmud, who was very particular about facial beauty. "The title ملک," says Kazimirski, "does not imply anything of royalty."

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poet-laureate introducing unknown poets to the king ; and also the above-mentioned eulogy of 'Unsuri by Minuchihri. 'Unsuri's reputation and popularity in Ghazna were well-established. He had lost his teeth in the Ghaznawide service and Minuchihri may have solicited therefore the favour of the poet-laureate. But to insist that all poets without exception gained access to the king solely through 'Unsuri's help and recommendation is not established by the facts before us. At any rate, it does not hold for Minuchihri.

In 1031 A. D., therefore, Minuchihri arrived at Ghazna. He was still young :

حاسدم گوید که ما پیریم و تو برنا نری

Says my rival, 'We are old and you are young.'

but could by no means have been very young, for his profound knowledge of theology, medicine, prosody, and Arabian poetry, entire *diwans* of which he knew from memory,

من بدانم علم دین و علم طب و علم نحو

.....

من بسی دیوان شعر تازیان دارم زیر

I know theology, medicine, and grammar.

.....

I know several *diwans* of Arabian poets by heart.

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was certainly not acquired at Ghazna. His *gasidas* written in Ghazna have a perfection of form and style showing much preliminary study. Moreover, what other reason but the maturity of his intellectual, and in particular his poetical powers could there have been for his invitation to Ghazna ?

Of the poetical activity of Minuchihri in the years before he arrived at Ghazna, the only record is two or three *gasidas*. Surely this could not have been the entire output of the poet at court. If so, what was the fate of the other odes ? Although I am not able to prove convincingly my statement, I believe they were intentionally destroyed, by the poet himself, or his confreres, and for the weightiest of reasons.

That a successful suppression of his work could have been effected is illustrated by the fate of the *History of Mirza Jani* which, says Prof. Browne,

was so successfully suppressed that had it not been for the accident that an intelligent and sympathetic though unbelieving foreigner, the Comte de Gobineau, obtained and brought to Europe a manuscript of the work in question before "the exigencies of the time. *مصلحت وقت*," demanded its suppression it would probably have perished utterly.....This fact is very instructive in connection with the history of other religions for it is hard for us, accustomed to a world of printed books and

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carefully guarded public-libraries, to realise that so important a work as this could be successfully suppressed.....The application of this fact which, were it not established by the clearest evidence, I should have regarded as incredible, I leave to professional theologians to whom it may not be devoid of a wider significance.<sup>1</sup>

But to proceed. Minuchihr, being the loyal son-in-law of Mahmud, the earlier poems of Minuchihr—those produced at Minuchihr's court—must have contained, *ipso facto*, praise of Minuchihr's overlord, Sultan Mahmud, just as the panegyrics on Mas'ud's ministers include also the praise of Mas'ud. This would have been gall and wormwood to Mas'ud, ever at daggers drawn with his father, who had publicly deprived him of the Ghazna crown.<sup>2</sup> The animosity between the son and father was no secret. Indeed, Minuchihr makes use of this very fact, when he eulogises Mas'ud at the expense of his father.

بار خدای جهان خلیفه معبود

نیکش مولود و نه ک طالعی مولود

گوی محمود بود پیش ز مسعود

فی فی مسعود هست پیش ز محمود

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. E. G. Browne, *Introduction*, pp. xxxiv—xxxv, to his edition of *Nuqlat-ul-Kaf (History of the Babis)* by Hajji Mirza Jani of Kashan.

<sup>2</sup> See *supra*, pp. 106—107.

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هجو - بجان که پیش بود ز داود

بیشتر از زال بود رستم بن زال

The Master of the World, the adored Caliph, whose nativity and star of nativity are (alike) auspicious.

Would'st thou say, 'Mahmud is superior to Mas'ud?' Nay, nay, Mas'ud is superior to Mahmud;

Even as Solomon was superior to David, so is Rustam, the son of Zal, to his father.

Obviously having belittled Mahmud the poet could not have retained verses wherein he had extolled that monarch, especially as envious rivals were constantly at his elbow ready to expose his dubious loyalty—dubious, because loyalty to Mahmud meant disloyalty to Mas'ud. Hence the poet's insistence on his singular attachment to Mas'ud, whom alone he professes to have served at Ghazna. He declares that he has not been seeking two masters—by implication, Mahmud and Mas'ud. Having searched for Mas'ud and found him, Minuchihri is at the end of his quest.

جز بر در شهنشه بر در گهی رفتم

نه بر در حجازی نه بر در بخاری

چون تو نیم که خدمت کهنرگی و مهر

از بهر دو دوشانی و ز بهر يك دوانی

Save the court of the Emperor, I have sought none other—  
neither the court of Hedjaz, nor the court of Bukhara.



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I am not like thee who servest the great and the small  
and worshipest two idols in the hope of a sanctuary.

Is it unlikely then that the poet had his earlier incriminating compositions destroyed as the safest plan for rapid advancement, tactics which were completely successful? If this hypothesis is maintained, it would explain the paucity of the odes on Minuchihr, and therefore the brevity of the *diwan* of Minuchihri. The poet was well rewarded at Ghazna and howsoever his rapid progress be explained, I fear, like Banquo of Macbeth, 'he played most foully for't.'

We have seen elsewhere how Persia in the reign of Mas'ud was but the replica of Sasanian Persia. The court-poets flocked to the throne shouting Hosanna to the Highest, and Minuchihri led them on—he was the most vociferous of all. No other poet of Persia has pushed the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings so far as he has done. It is the core round which his panegyrics are crystallised.

این جهان کرد برای تو خداوند جهان  
و آن جهان من یقینم که برای تو کند  
همه عدلست همه حکمت و انصاف تمام  
هرچه از فضل و کرم با تو خدای تو کند

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نه تواند که جزاي تو کند خلق بخیر  
ملك العرش تواند که جزاي تو کند

The Lord of the World hath given this world to thee ;  
I am certain that the next world also will He give to  
thee.

It is absolute justice, equity, and wisdom, whatever in His  
wisdom and bounty God does for thee.

People cannot adequately requite thee ; the Lord of the  
Heavens alone can.

مسعود ملك آنکه نبودست و نباشد  
از مملکتش تا ابد الدهر جدائي  
این مملکت خسرو تانید سمای است  
باطل نشود هرگز تانید سمای  
ایزد همه آفاق بدو داد و بحق داد  
ناحق نبود آنچه بود کار خدائي

King Mas'ud who has been and will be inseparable from  
his kingdom till eternity.

The King's domains are a celestial gift ; a celestial gift is not  
ephemeral.

God has bestowed on him the world—and rightly : whatever  
be the act of God cannot but be right.

ای میر جهان ایزد بسپرد بتو کیهان  
کیهان بستمگاری دانم که نه بسپاری  
این مملکت مشرق را وین مملکت مغرب را  
آری نو مزاورای آری نو مزاورای

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O Amir of the World, God bestowed on thee the world ; I know  
that thou shalt not bequeath this world to an oppressor.  
The Kingdom of the East and the Kingdom of the West,  
become thee alone, become thee alone.

ای ملک ایزد جهان رای تو کرد است  
ما همه را از پی هوای تو کرد است  
هر چه بکرد ای ملک سزای تو کرد است  
نیکو کاری که او بجای تو کرد است  
عالم را خاک کف پای تو کرد است  
عز و جل ایزد معین متعال

O King, God hath made the world for thee, and us all for thy service.

Whatever He hath done, O King, for thee hath He done ;  
Well-a-day that He hath done for thee.

He hath made the Universe (as) dust at thy feet—He, God,  
the Glorious, High, and Omnipotent.

این ولایت سندن حکم خداست ترا  
نبود چون و چرا کس را بجهک اله

To take this kingdom God commands thee : the Divine order is not to be questioned.

From the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings the argument winds a step higher to the right of kings to divinity—Sasanianism again, less than Sasanianism and yet more : less, for the Ghaznawide King, unlike Shapur, never styled himself a god ; more, for the deification of the

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sovereign was accompanied by the deification of the court. Thus Minuchihri establishes a regular thearchy of king, duke, earl, count, and baron.

The minister of Mas'ud has the status of a prophet :

گر پیمبر زنده بودی بر لسان جبرئیل  
آمدی در شان جودش آیت از عرش خدای

Had the Prophet been alive, Gabriel would have brought a chapter in honour of his bounty from the throne of God.

or of a god :

گر کسی گوید که در گیتی کسی برسان است  
گر همه پیغمبری باشد بود یافته درای

Whosoever says that he (Masu'd) has an equal in the world is a prattling fool—even were he a prophet.

or of the Creator himself :

بروی پاک و رای نیک و فعل خوب و کار خوش  
نظیر او ندانم کس چه در دنیا چه در عقی

In graceful appearance, accurate judgment, noble actions, and lofty behaviour I know not his equal, whether in this world or the next.

So, too, the generalissimo of the Eastern troops,  
'Ali b. Obeidullah :

شطري ز کارخانه حکم تو کاینات  
شطري ز کارنامه حلم تو کن فکانت

The Creation is but a part of the working of thy command; 'Be and it is,'<sup>1</sup> is but a line from the record of thy mercy.

Having expunged his own verses and erased from his memory all records of his native land :

بمها باري بدین درگاه شاهست آرزو  
نزی و گرگان همی یاد آمدم نر خافین

All my desire is centered in the court of this king; I do not remember Rayy, Gurgan, or Khafaqin.

and dishonoured his master's son, Kay-Kaus of Gurgan, who was unfriendly to Mas'ud, to honour his new patron :

چون قصد کیا کرد و بگرگان و بامل  
بگذاشت کیا مملکت خویش و کیای

کار ممد و کار کیا نابدا شد  
زین نیز بقر باشد شانت و بنوای

When he marched against Kiya and Gurgan and Amil, **Kiya** left his empire and his splendour.

The plan of Kiya for obtaining help<sup>2</sup> went wrong; hereafter the distress of the intriguers shall increase.

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<sup>1</sup> *Qur'an*, Ch. XXIX. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Kay-Kaus had unsuccessfully applied for help from his neighbours.

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is it strange that the poet should desecrate the dead Sultan to consecrate the living ?

سلطان معظم ملک عادل مسعود

از گوی مسعود و به از گوی محمود  
چونانکه به از عود بود نایره عود

.....

شاهی که ز مادر ملک و مهتر زاد است  
هر چه آن پدرش را نکشاد او بکشاد است

The puissant Sultan, the just sovereign Mas'ud

From the substance of Mahmud, and better than the substance  
of Mahmud—As better than aloes is the odour of aloes.

A king who was born from his mother a king and a noble (king)  
who has won what his father could not win.

Most uncommon praise indeed—for Persians are usually scrupulous to avoid invidious comparisons—especially between father and son. The precedent established in Achæmenian times :

When the Persians and Croesus were sitting with him, Cambyses asked what sort of man he appeared to be in comparison with his father Cyrus. They answered that he was superior to his father for he held all that Cyrus possessed, and had acquired Egypt and the empire of the sea besides. Croesus, being present, not being pleased with this decision, spoke thus to Cambyses: "To me, now, O son of Cyrus, you do

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not appear comparable to your father, for you have not yet such a son as he left behind him." Cambyzes was delighted at hearing this and commended the judgment of Croesus.<sup>1</sup>

was revoked in the Ghaznawide. Whom shall we condemn more? The irreverent king glad to measure his living tissue with the dead bones of the great Mahmud, or the poet whose

Honour rooted in dishonour stood,  
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true?

No poet was more fit to be the boon-companion of Mas'ud than Minuchihri, for he reciprocated the King's thoughts and echoed his sentiments without remorse or regret. What wonder that he waxed fat and rich?

من بنده را برحمت کردی بزرگ شاما  
پاینده باد بخت پاینده بختیاری

Through thy kindness thou hast made me great, O King; lasting be thy fortune, lasting thy prosperity.

Minuchihri survived his master, but the *diwan* contains no threnody on Mas'ud, nor panegyric on his successor. The poet evidently retired into private life, thriving on the interest of his capital, too wary to speculate further with his poetry in the troublous times that followed Mas'ud's deposition and murder.

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<sup>1</sup> Herodotus.

II

"The first and most obvious remark upon Vaughan is that his genius was largely imitative; the next and almost as obvious, that it was curiously original."<sup>1</sup>

I am indebted to Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch for his subtle exposition, for if ever a criticism in its entirety can apply to two authors, with the difference of the East and the West, and six centuries between them, this of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch does—to Vaughan and to Minuchihri. In the entire range of Persian poetry there is not to be found such mimicry and originality as in his *diwan*; nor elsewhere such unity in duality. The poet's talent for production is neither more nor less than his talent for reproduction: the imitative faculty runs a dead-heat with the creative.

Minuchihri bases his poetry on the *qasida*, and the *qasida* on the Arabian models of the pre-Islamic period. Of these, says Ibn Qutayba,

I have heard from a man of learning that the composer of odes began by mentioning the deserted dwelling-places and the relics and traces of habitation. Then he wept and complained and addressed the desolate encampment and begged his companion to make a halt, in order that he might have occasion

<sup>1</sup> Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, *Studies in Literature*, p. 140.



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to speak of those who had once lived there and afterwards departed; for the dwellers in tents were different from townsmen or villagers in respect of coming and going, because they moved from one water-spring to another, seeking pasture and searching out the places where rain had fallen. Then to this he linked the erotic prelude and bewailed the violence of his love and the anguish of separation from his mistress and the extremity of his passion and desire, so as to win the hearts of his hearers and divert their eyes towards him and invite their ears to listen to him, since the song of love touches men's souls and takes hold of their hearts, God having put it in the constitution of his creatures to love dalliance and the society of women, in such wise that we find very few but are attached thereto by some tie or have some share therein, whether lawful or unpermitted. Now, when the poet had assured himself of an attentive hearing, he followed up his advantage and set forth his claim: thus he went on to complain of fatigue and want of sleep and travelling by night and of the noonday heat, and how his camel had been reduced to leanness. And when, representing all the discomfort and danger of his journey, he knew that he had fully justified his hope and expectation of receiving his due meed from the person to whom the poem was addressed, he entered upon the panegyrics and incited him to reward and kindled his generosity by exalting him above his peers and pronouncing the greatest dignity, in comparison with his, to be little.<sup>1</sup>

Tha'alibi (died 1038 A. D.) commenting on these ancient odes "bids the poets draw inspiration from nature and truth instead of relating imaginary journeys on a camel which they never owned, through deserts which they never saw, to

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholson, R. A., *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 76.

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a patron residing in the same city as themselves."<sup>1</sup>  
But, as Hafiz says,

هر گل نو ز گلرخي ياد همي کند ولي  
گوش سخن شنو کجا دیده اعتبار کو

Each new rose is calling to mind a rose-red form, but where is  
the ear to hear, the eye to see ?

Minuchihri waived the new criticism and fell back upon copying the old classical models. Does not this ode of Minuchihri—and there are others like it—answer to Ibn Qutayba's description ?

سلام علی دار ام الکواعب بآن سیه چشم غبر ذوائب  
وسوم الطلل والديار الدوارس چو بر صدر منشور توقيع صاحب  
مقام غواني گرفته نايح بساط عنادل سپرده عنائب  
سمن زار گشته ديار سلاحف چمن زار گشته وجار ثعالب  
چوسير کواکب بدین گونه دیدم براندم نجيب از مقام مصائب  
شب تیره و باد غضبان فدند همی آمد آواز غول از جوانب  
همه راه و بیراه خار مغیلان عقابان وادي بسان عقارب  
فقاد آنکھی چشم من بر قوافل عیون غمرقه درخون والدمع ساکب  
زده خیمها دیدم اندر مجاري درخشان چو در دیر مصباح ثاقب

<sup>1</sup> Nicholson R. A., *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 288.

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گر از آن چو طاوس گرد مشارب	و خیمه برون آمده خوب رویان
رخ خوب لامع مری زلف لاعبه	لب لعل خاحک خم جمه کافر
مسائل غدا بر شب بچل تراپ	معنبر ذوائب معقد عقایص
چو حور بهشتی میان کواعب	خراماں بت من میان جواری
ز خورشید روشن تر اندر کواکب	زارواح صافی تر اندر لطایف
و الهمت بالخر و بالخر واجب	فکنگدم رحال و زمام نجیم
بخت عمید فریدون مراتب	نگه کردم اندر جهان لطایف

Salute to the residence of the Queen of young women with plump breasts, of idols with black eyes, and amber-coloured tresses.

(Salute to) the relics of encampments, and deserted dwelling-places, like the impress of a royal seal on warrants.

The hall of music has become a house of mourning: the home of nightingales is given over to spiders.

The garden-lawn has become the abode of tortoises; the jessamine-bed, the hole of foxes.

When I saw the sport of the stars in this wise, I drove my camel from the scene of disaster.

Dark the night, and stormy the winds over the plain; from all sides, the demons' dreadful wailing.

On the road and off the road, Arabian thorns: and scorpion-like the eagles of the valleys.

Then my eyes fell on the caravans, my eyes blood-shot and flowing with tears;

By the side of the streams, I saw the tents pitched, glittering like shining lanterns in a monastery.

And from out the tents came fair-faced ones, dancing like peacocks round a pool,

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**The ruby-lips ridiculing ; the curled tresses pagan ; the fair face shining ; the hair-tips playful (in the wind).**

**The fore-locks amber-perfumed ; the ringlets knotted ; the lock-curles linked together ; the breasts mirror-clear.**

**Among virgins my sweetheart was walking gracefully, like a *Houri* of Paradise amidst plump-breasted maidens.**

**In her pleasantries, purer than the soul ; in her starlike group of maidens, more brilliant than the Sun.**

**I flung away the bit and bridle of my camel, and resolved on slaughter ; for slaughter was needed here.**

**I looked into this world of refinement under the auspices of that trusted (lord) of Feridun's rank.**

The fidelity extends to the rhyme, the subject-matter, the trend of thought, and even to the language. The Persian in it becomes less and less, and the Arabic more and more. One is almost tempted to believe that the poet thought in Arabic and wrote in Persian—thought of pre-Islamic Arabia and lived in Ghaznawide Persia. Indeed, the evidence in the *qasidas* is unmistakeable that the poet's mind was not only saturated with Arabic culture, and utterly incapable of assimilating contemporary ideas save one—king and court-worship—but that it was constantly working backwards through Mutanabbi (915—965 A. D.), Bashshar (put to death 783 A. D.), to A'sha and Imru'l-Qays (d. 540 A. D.). For these his love and reverence is undisguised. They are his acknowledged masters, whose aid he seeks, whose name he invokes. Theirs is the inspiration;

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گرم مرزوقی فرمای بخدمت همان گویم که اعشی گفت و دعبل

Provide me with some place and thou shalt see Di'bil <sup>1</sup> and  
A'sha <sup>2</sup> envious of my lay. <sup>3</sup>

دهاد ایزد مرا در نظم شعرت دل بشار و طبع ابن مقبل

God give me Bashshar's <sup>4</sup> talent and the tongue of Ibn Muqbil,  
thee to praise alway. <sup>5</sup>

چون من ترا مدحت کنم گویم که خود اعشی منم

از بسکه اندر دامنم از چرخ بارد قافیه

When I write thy praises I say that I am A'sha myself, so freely  
does Heaven make my rhymes flow from the pen.

the metre ;

بر آن وزن این شعر گفتم که گفت است

ابو شیبص اعرابی باستانی

I have set this poem to the same metre as adopted by Abu  
Shais, the ancient Arab poet.

the theme ;

بزیرویم شعر اعشی و قیس زنده همی زد بنایها

<sup>1</sup> Di'bil belonged to the Shia sect and died in 860. A. D.

<sup>2</sup> Al-A'sha Mamun b. Qays was a contemporary of the Prophet.

<sup>3</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

<sup>4</sup> Bashshar b. Burd, the blind sceptic and poet, was put to death in A. D. 783.

<sup>5</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

و کاس شربت علی لذة و آخري تداويت منهاها  
لکی يعلم الناس أني امرء اخذت المعيشة من بابها

A musician played with his wine-red fingers to the alto and bass  
of the poems of A'sha and Imru'l-Qays :

'I drank the wine-cup with pleasure, and then another as an  
antidote to the first,

So that all may know that I am he who takes his subsistence at  
this door.'

the thought ;

بر افتاد بر طرف دیوار من زبکازها نور مهتابها

On one side of my room the wine shed lunar light.<sup>1</sup>

and the plot;

الا باخیمگی خیمه فرو هل که پیش آهنگ بیرون شد زمزل  
تیره زن همی زد طبل نخستین شتر بانان همی بندند محل

<sup>1</sup> See Kazimirski's *Menoulchehri*, p. 324. 'Minuchihri has  
borrowed the idea from Abu Nuwas.' A man enters a wine-  
shop and is asked by the owner how he managed to get there.

فقلت له ترفق بی فانی رایت الصبح من خلل الدیار  
فکان جوابه ان قال کلا وما صبح سوی صبح العتار

'Be kind to me,' I said to him, 'I perceived the dawn through  
the chinks of your house.'

'Not in the least, it was not the dawn that you have seen,'  
replied he, 'it is the brightness of wine.'

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نگارین منا بر گرد مگري که کار عاشقان را نیست حاصل

چو برگشت از من آن معشوق معشوق نهادم صاري را جنگ بر دل  
نگه کردم بگرد کار و نگاه بجاي خيمه و جاي قوايل  
نه وحشي دیدم آنجا و نه انسی نه را کب دیدم آنجا و نه راجل

.....

همیراندم نجیب خویش چون باد همي گفتم که اللهم سهل

.....

همي رفتم شتابان در بیابان همي کردم يك منزل دو منزل

.....

نجیب خویش را گفتم سبکتر الا یا دستگیر مرد فاضل  
بیابان در نورد و کوه بگذار منازلها بکوب و راه بگل  
فیوود آور بدرگاه وزیرم فرود آوردن اعشی بیابل  
بعالی در که دستور کو راست معالی از اعالي وز اسافل

O tentsman, haste, and strike the tent, I pray ! The caravan's-  
already under way ;

The drummer sounds already the first drum ; their loads the  
drivers on the camels lay.

My darling, wend thee hence, and weep no more for fruitless  
are the hopes of lovers, aye. <sup>1</sup>

When that elegant sweetheart departed from me, I resigned  
myself to patience ;

I looked round the caravansarai and in place of tents and  
travellers,

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<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

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Saw neither beast nor man, rider nor man afoot.

I drove my camel like the wind, and prayed, 'O God, render my route easy.'

Swiftly I tore through the desert ; and covered one resting-stage after another.<sup>1</sup>

Then to my gallant beast I cried aloud, 'O friend of talent ! Quicker<sup>2</sup> now I pray !

Traverse the desert, climb the mountain ridge, beat down the stages, cut the miles away.

Then set me down at that Wazir's Court.'<sup>3</sup>

Whose lofty aims greatness in things both great and small display.

Minuchihri can at best but imitate them.

<sup>1</sup> My translation.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Browne has 'slower,' which is wrong.

<sup>3</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

<sup>4</sup> My translation based on Prof. Browne's.



III

We are all sensible how differently the imagination is affected by the same sentiment expressed in different words, and how mean or how grand the same object appears when presented to us by different painters. Whether it is the human figure, an animal, or even inanimate objects, there is nothing however unpromising in appearance but may be raised into dignity, convey sentiment, and produce emotion in the hands of a painter of genius. What was said of Vergil that he threw even the dung about the ground with an air of dignity may be applied to Titian: whatever he touched, however naturally mean and habitually familiar, by a kind of magic he invested with grandeur and importance.<sup>1</sup>

So with Milton and Firdawsi. It is their greatness that they are great throughout—alike in their treatment of grand themes, the fall of Lucifer from Heaven and the fall of the Offspring of God from the Throne,<sup>2</sup> and in their treatment of small themes, the coming of night and the passing of day.

So also in a sense Minuchihri. We include him with Firdawsi and Milton not because he has anything like a lost Atlantis to show against an

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<sup>1</sup> *Sir Joshua Reynolds* by Edmond Malone, Vol. II. p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> The Pahlawi inscription at Naksh-i-Rajab reads: "This is the image of the Ormuzd-worshipper, the God Shapur, King of Kings, Aryan and non-Aryan, of the race of the Gods, son of the Ormuzd-worshipper, the God Ardeshir, King of Kings, Aryan, of the race of the Gods, the offspring of the God Papak, the King."

empire lost or a paradise regained, but because he is the only poet whom we know who has consistently taken the humbler theme and so persisted that each time he has made it grand. Observe him in his garden—not a paradise made by God, not a paradise made by man,<sup>1</sup> but just a plain simple orchard with pear-trees and pomegranates, peach-trees, and apple-trees of the earth, just a plain simple vineyard with himself as the vintner and the vine-keeper. His genius transmutes these pomegranates, pears, and peaches into the food of gods, and the grape-juice into nectar for gods to drink. And the process of transformation is not metaphysical. It is enacted before our very eyes. The grapes—the mother-grape, the daughter-grape, and the grape-juice—become the Holy Trinity itself!

انگور بکردار زنی غایه رنگ است  
او را شکمی همچو یکی فایه دانست  
اندر شکمش هست یکی جان و سه تا دل  
وین هر سه مرا و راز سه پاره سخوانست  
گویند که حیوان را جان باید در دل  
آب را سخوانی دل و جانست و روانست

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<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 53.

جانت را شنیدم که بود رنگ دل جانش  
مهرنگ یکی لاله که در لاله سناست  
چنان را نبود بوی خوش و بوی خوش او  
چون بوی خوش غالیه و عنبر و بانست  
انگور سیاه است و چو میاه است و عجب نیست  
زیرا که سیاهی صفت ماه درو بانست  
عبیش جز این نیست که آبستن گشته  
او نیز یکی دخترکی تازه جوانست  
بی شوی شد آبستن چون دختر عمران  
وین قصه بسی خوبتر و خوشتر از انست  
زیرا که گر آبستن مریم بدهان شد  
این دختر رز را نه لب است و نه دهان است  
آبستنی دختر عمران به پسر بود  
و آبستنی دختر انیسگر در بچان است  
آب روح خداوند همه خلق جهان بود  
وین راح خداوند همه خلق جهان است  
آب را بگرفتند و کشیدند و بکشتند  
وین را بکشد و بکشد این به چه سان است

*The Poetry of Minutichiki*

آب زنده بگی را و دو را گرد بمجیز  
وین زلده گر جان همه خلق زمان ا  
ناکشن و کشن صفت روح قدس بود  
ناکشن و گشن صفت این حیوان است  
گر قصد جهودان بد در گشن عیسی  
در کشن این قصد همه اهل قران است  
آب را نگر از کشن آنها چه زبان بود  
وین را نگر از کشن اینها چه زبان است  
آب را پس مینوی زهمه رنج امان بود  
وین را پس مینوی زهمه رنج امان است  
آب را بسماوات مکان گشت مرا این را  
بودست امیران و وزیرانش مکان است

The Grape is like a musk-coloured woman and her womb is like a musk-holder.

In her womb she bears one Life and three hearts, but these are three pieces of bone.

They say that an animal's life is in its heart. But her heart and her life and her soul are bone.

I never heard that Life has colour, but her life has colour like a tulip in a garden.

Life bears no fragrance, but hers is the fragrance of musk, amber, and the Myrabolan.

The grape is black, and like the Moon, and no wonder, for blackness is an attribute of the moon-faced.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kazimirski believes this to be an allusion to the black hair of (moon-faced) ladies. The meaning however is not clear.

## ***Studies in Persian Literature***

She has no other fault apart from her pregnancy and she is still a maiden just come of age.

Without a husband she became pregnant, like the daughter of Amran, but this story is far more interesting and entertaining than that.

For by breath Mary became pregnant but this daughter of vine without lips or breath.

The pregnancy of the daughter of Amran led to (the birth of) a Son; the pregnancy of the daughter of vine leads to (the birth of) Life.

That was the Soul of the God of all Creation ; this wine is the God of all Creation.

Him they seized and drew (to the gallows) and killed; her, they kill and draw (out)— strange! can it be ?

He brought back to life but one or two; she brings back all the world.

Life in Death denoted the Holy Ghost; Life in Death denotes her.

The Jews intended to kill Christ ; the whole world intends to kill her.

Behold, what loss did He suffer at their hands ? and lo, what loss does she suffer ?

He attained complete bliss after His trials ; she attains complete bliss after hers.

The Heavens became His mansion ; but her place is on the hand of kings and ministers.

The fields, flowers, and fruit were his, as he was theirs. To the bird's songs his music is attuned. His notes are as the notes of birds, for his heart was light. Happy with his violet-beds, roses, and jessamines,

*The Poetry of Minuchihr*

عروسانند پنداری بگرد نمرز پوشیده  
همه کفها به ساغر ها همه سرها به انسر ها

There are brides concealed in the meadows, thou wouldst think;  
lasses with (wine-) glasses and crowns on their heads.

and the song of nightingales, thrushes; and larks,

زمین محراب داود ست از بس سبزه پنداری  
کشاده مرغکان بر شاخ چون داود خنجرها

So verdant is the land, thou wouldst think it was the prayer-  
niche of David ; on branches, the songsters have opened  
their throats like David.

why should he think of other things ? The distant  
Tabaristan and the dead Minuchihr ? The envy  
of rivals and the malice of foes ? For if

Alone, alone, all, all alone,

even so he is content; his very candle is company.

ای نهاده بر میان فرق جان خویشتن  
جسم ما زنده بجان و جان تو زنده بتن  
گر نه کوب چرا پیدا نگردي جز شب  
ورنه عاشق چرا گري ممي بر خویشتن  
کو کی آري وليکن آسمان تست موم  
عاشقي آري وليکن هست معشوقه لکن

## Studies in Persian Literature

پیرهن در زیر تن پوشی و پوشه هر کسی  
 بپیرهن بر تن تو تن پوشی همی بر پیرهن  
 چون بپیری آتش اندر تو رسد زنده شوی  
 چون شوی بیمار بهتر گردی از گردن زدن  
 قاصد خندی همی گر نی و این بس نادر است  
 م تو مشوقی و م تو عاشقی بر خوبش  
 بشکنی بی نو بهار و پژمری بی مهرگان  
 بگری بی دیدگان و باز خندی بی دهن

Thou, whose soul upon thy forehead glitters like an aureole,  
 By our souls, our flesh subsists, while by thy flesh subsists  
 thy soul.

Why, if not a star, dost waken only when all others sleep ?

Why, if not a lover, ever o'er thyself forlorn dost weep ?

Yes, thou art indeed a star, but shinest in a waxen sphere !

Yes, thou art a lover, but thy sweetheart is the chandelier !

O'er thy shirt <sup>1</sup> thou wear'st thy body : strange indeed ; for  
 all the rest !

Wear the vest upon the skin, but thou the skin upon the vest !

Thou revivest if upon thee falls the fire when thou art dead,<sup>2</sup>

And when thou art sick they cure thee best by cutting off thy<sup>3</sup>  
 head !

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<sup>1</sup> "The 'shirt' of the candle is its wick and its 'body' is the wax."

<sup>2</sup> i. e. extinguished.

<sup>3</sup> "Alluding to the snuffing of the wick."

## *The Poetry of Minuchihri*

Even midst thy smiles thou weepest,<sup>1</sup> and moreover, strange  
to tell

Thou art of thyself the lover, and the well-beloved as well !

Thou without the Spring dost blossom, and without the Autumn  
die,

Laughing now without a mouth, and weeping now without  
an eye.<sup>2</sup>

Is that a terrestrial candle or the celestial fire  
stolen from the gods, that the poet should make  
himself an "artificial night to look fair daylight  
out" ?

رسم ناخفتن بروز است و من از بهر ترا

بموسن باشم همه شب روز باشم باوسن

از فراق تو بگشتم عبودی آفتاب

وز وصال بر شب تیره شدستم مفتن

'Tis custom, not to sleep by day—but for thy sake

By day, I sleep ; whilst through the night am quite awake.

From thy face when I am parted hateful is the sunshine bright  
And when thou art taken from me, sad and sorrowful the  
night.<sup>3</sup>

تو صبا مانی بینه من ترا مانم همی

دشمنم خوشم همی دو دوستار انجمن

خوبشتم سوزم هر دو بر مراد دوستان

دوستان در راحتند از ما و ما اندر حزن

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<sup>1</sup> "The candle 'smiles' when it shines and 'weeps' when  
it gutters."

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



## Studies in Persian Literature

هردو گریانیم و هردو زرد و هردو در گداز  
هردو سوزانیم و هردو فرد و هردو تمنحن  
انچه من بر دل نهادم برمرت بینم همی  
انچه تو بر سر نهادی در دلم دارد وطن  
روی تو چون شنبلیله نو شکفته بامداد  
روی من چون شنبلیله پژمرده در چمن  
من دگر یاران خود را آزمودم خاص و عام  
فی طلبگاری در بک تن فی وفا اندردو تن  
رازدار من تویی همواره یار من تویی  
غمگسار من تویی من آن تو تو آن من

Me most nearly thou resemblest; closely I resemble thee;  
Kindly friends of all the world, but foes unto ourselves are we.  
Both of us consume and spend ourselves to make our comrades  
glad,

And by us our friends are rendered happy while ourselves  
are sad.

Both are weeping, both are wasting, both are pale and weary-  
eyed,

Both are burned in isolation, both are spurned and sorely-tried. ~

I behold upon thy head what in my heart doth hidden rest;  
Thou upon thy head dost carry what I hide within my breast.

Both our visages resemble yellow flowers of *shanbalid*,

- Mine the bud unopened, thine the bloom which beautifies the  
mead.

All my other friends I've tested, great and little, low and high,  
Found not one with kindly feeling, found not two with loyalty.

## *The Poetry of Minuchihi*

Thou, O Candle, art my friend; to thee my secrets I consign;  
Thou art my familiar comrade, I am thine and thou art mine.<sup>1</sup>

There is fraud and treachery all around, and an unwonted dolorous cry: 'from my friends defend me.' This pessimism is rare, for Minuchihi's was a spirit too gay, too sprightly, too full of *joie de vivre* to know of melancholy but as a passing phase. The fit comes and goes. It is only the sadness of the moment; no more.

But just at that moment where we are and how none can tell. We lose ourselves in the poet even more than he himself in the candle. He but weeps in sympathy; we are like Niobe all tears.

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne's translation.

IV

"Whether it is the human figure, an animal, or even inanimate objects, there is nothing however unpromising in appearance but may be raised into dignity, convey sentiment, and produce emotion in the hands of a painter of genius." To appreciate Minuchihri, we have to reverse the order of life given by Sir Joshua. The poet is at his best in his description of inanimate objects—whether natural; a cloud, a rain-bow, or a shower of rain: or artificial; a candle, a pen, or a wine-jar—and in his description of plant-life—an apple, lime, or an orange.

بنگر به ترنج ای عجیبی وار که چون است  
بسته فی سخت است و دراز است و نگون است  
زرد است و سپید است و سپیدیش فزون است  
زردیش برونست و سپیدیش درون است  
چون سیم درون است و چو دینار برون است  
آگده بر آن سیم درون لولو شهوار

O, how wonderful, behold, is the orange! It is a hard breast elongated and inverted.

It is yellow and white; and more white than yellow; outside it is yellow, inside it is white.

Inside, like silver; outside, like a penny; the silver interior is packed with royal pearls.

## *The Poetry of Minuchihi*

His study of birds is less perfect, for it lacks the master-touch which makes his still-life painting live. But when we come to higher life, all unawares we drop into bathos. The grape's aureole is pure art; the Sultan's halo mere vulgarity. Consider this lovely landscape-sketch in black and white.

بر آمد ز کوه ابو مازندران	چو مارشکنجی و ماز اندران
بسان یکی زنگی حامله	شکم کرده هنگام زادن گران
همی زاد این دختر مر سید	چو پیران فروت پنبه سران
جز این ابر و جز مادر زال زر	نزداند چه نین پسر مادران
همی آمدند از هوا خورد خورد	چو پنبه سید ادران دختران
تو گوی بیاغ اندرون روز برف	صف ناز بود و صف عمر عران
بسی خواهرانند بر راه رز	سیه موزکان و سمن چادران
پوشند در زیر چادر همه	ستبرق ز بالای سر تابران
ز زان بر اوژ گوی که هست	کلاه سیه بر سر خواهران
چنان کار گاه سمرقند گشت	زمین از در بلخ تا خاوران
درو بام و دیوار آن کار گاه	چنان زنگیانند و کاغذ گران
مر این زنگیان را چه کار افتاد	که کاغذ گران اند و کاغذ خران
شود کاغذ تازه و ترو خشک	چو خورشید لختی بتابد بر آن

## *Studies in Persian Literature*

و ایکن شود تری این فزون      چو تابند پیش اندر آن نیران  
شده آبگیران فسرده زنج      چنان کوس روئین اسکندران  
چو — ندان آهنگران گشته بچ      چو آهنگران ابر مازندران  
بر آید بزیر آن نگرگ از هوا      چنان پتک پولاد آهنگران

The cloud of Mazendaran has emerged from the mountain—  
like a writhing serpent with abdominal pain.

Like a pregnant negress, with an abdomen enlarged at the time  
of confinement.

She gave birth to white-headed daughters, like decrepit women  
with heads of cotton.

Save this cloud and the mother of *Zal-Zer*<sup>1</sup>; no mother has  
delivered herself of such offspring.

They came down in small flakes through the air, tiny little girls,  
white like cotton.

Ravens are sitting round their heads, like nurses in black veils.

Thou wouldst say that in the garden, when it snows, there are  
but rows of (black) pines and mountain-cypresses.

There are many daughters in the vineyard in black stockings  
and lily (white) robes.<sup>2</sup>

They wear underneath their (white) robes (dark-purple) satin<sup>3</sup>  
from head to knee.

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<sup>1</sup> Rustam's father, *Zal-Zer*, was born with albinized hair.

<sup>2</sup> The daughter of the vine *i. e.* the grapes. The snow falling  
from above had whitened the upper exposed parts of the  
plantation; the nether-protected portions retained their natural  
blackness.

<sup>3</sup> The purple-black colour of the grape is veiled by the settled  
snow.

## *The Poetry of Minuchikhi*

The ravens sitting on the pines make, thou wouldst say, black caps on the daughters' heads.<sup>1</sup>

From Balkh to Khaveran <sup>2</sup> the land is like the factory at Samarqand.<sup>3</sup>

The doors, roof, and walls of that factory are like negroes and paper-makers.<sup>4</sup>

But what has befallen these negroes that they are paper-makers and paper-buyers ?

A moist paper dries when the sun shines on it a little.

But this paper becomes more wet as it gets more heat. The pools are frozen over with ice like the brass drums of Alexander.

The ice has hardened like the blacksmith's anvil ; like blacksmiths is the cloud of Mazendaran.

The hail comes down through the air, like the hammer-strokes of iron-smiths.

and, for a contrast, this account of a horse,

آفرین زان مرکب مینمون که دیدم بر درش  
مرکبی زین کرده و خاره برو جادو ربای

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<sup>1</sup> These "daughters" are the snow-flakes described in the first five verses. The black pines are snow-covered ; and on the snow-flakes are the black crows.

<sup>2</sup> from East to West, *i. e.*, as far as the eye can see.

<sup>3</sup> Evidently there was a factory at Samarqand for paper-making, in which negroes were employed as paper-makers. The snow is paper ; the land, snow-covered, is the floor of the factory, paper-strewn ; the snow-producing clouds are the paper-making negroes ; the clouds are also paper-buyers for when they dissolve, the paper (snow) melts as though they had purchased it and taken it away.

<sup>4</sup> *i. e.* the sky over-cast with clouds.

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گورجست و گاو پشت و گرگ ساق و گرگ روی

تیز گوش و رنگ چشم و شیر دست و پیل پای

Praise be to that auspicious horse I saw saddled at his door—  
whose hoofs would cut stones ; a magic horse.

Swift like the wild ass, bull-breasted, wolf-legged, wolf-faced,  
quick-eared, deer-eyed, lion-fore-limbed, *elephant-footed!*

گور ساق و شیر زهره یوز تاز و غرم تنگ

پیل گام و گرگ سینه رنگ تاز و گرگ خوی

Limbed like the wild ass, daring like the lion, pouncing like the  
panther, in flight like the deer.

*Elephant-footed*, wolf-breasted, deer-swift, and of wolfish temper.

Elephantine, bovine, cervine, lupine, leonine,  
asinine horse ! There have been monsters enough  
on earth but this horse beats them all.

Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimeras dire.

“Elephantine feet” for a horse ! *Curiosa infelicitas!*  
Has the artistic sense been apoplexed ? Or is  
it literary decrepitude ? For

but a sickly part of one true sense  
Could not so mope.

Elsewhere we have questioned the absolute reliability of internal evidence. Truth has usually lost against expediency, and expediency has ever controlled autobiographical references. Unfortunately, personal censoring has not yet had its due share of attention. Because external evidence is dubitable and valueless, the popular tendency has been to accept the converse that internal evidence is invaluable and indubitable.

There is another class of evidence, however, disseminated and diffuse, and therefore ignored, where the author has deliberately striven to conceal himself and has in consequence revealed himself most. Though it appear paradoxical, centrifugal evidence is occasionally the most centripetal, circumstantial evidence the most direct. No one credits Minuchihrī, for example, with omnisapience though he himself vaunt it ;

منم هر سخن را بیان معانی منم جان و عقل و هنر را قوال

I can explain the deepest thought in all sciences ; I am the heart and soul of reason and knowledge.

and no one can dispute his childlessness, though loquacious biographers be silent over it, and the *diwan* have not one explicit word to bear it out. The pent-up desire has manifested itself most



## *Studies in Persian Literature*

curiously. The poet has built himself a maternity hospital and made himself a professional obstetrician. Pregnant women and babes surround him. There are lyings-in and deliveries, nurses and feeding-bottles, labour-pain and progeny on almost every page of his *diwan*. His very world is pregnant.

Pregnant the earth, the cloud, the apple,

واندر شکش خوردك خوردك دوسه گنبد  
زنكي بجه خفته به هر يك در چون غلر

And in its abdomen, two or three tiny little domes: asleep in each, an Ethiopian babe, (black) like pitch.

the wine-jar,

چو آبستان اشکم آورده پيش  
چو خرم ابغان پن فوق مری

Like pregnant (women) her abdomen has protruded forwards; like palm-trees tops, spread-out her rim.

the weather,

باز جهان غرم و خوب ایستاد  
مرد زمستان و بهاران بزاد

The world has revived and is lovely again; Winter is dead and has given birth to Spring.

even water and time,

زمانه حامل هجراست و لابد  
نهند يك روز بار خویش حامل

## *The Poetry of Minuchikri*

The times are pregnant with separation; the pregnant will necessarily deliver themselves one day of their burden.

Pregnant with separation ! Odd perhaps, but not so odd and grotesque as his praise of Mas'ud.

که زن از هیبت او بار گیرد      چو خواهد زاد تمساح و غضنفر

A woman mates with his terror when she wishes to give birth to a crocodile or a lion.

This marks the height of the poet's indulgence in his obsession. It is natural for him to be so unnatural. The pregnant mother before his eyes, the cry of the new-born babe ringing in his ears, can there be any surer index of the childless father? It is unnecessary to accumulate examples; one has but to open the *diwan* at random. Notice how the land becomes a maternity ward,

خاک پنداری بپاه و مشتری آبستن است

مرغ پنداری که هست اندر گلستان شیرخوار

آن یکی گویا چرا شد نارسیده چون مسیح

و آن دگر بی شوی چون مریم چرا برداشت بار

The land is pregnant with Jupiter and the Moon, thou wouldst think; and the bird thou wouldst believe is a milk-sucking infant.

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Why has this learned to talk prematurely like the Messiah?  
And why has that become pregnant without a husband,  
like Mary?

so, too, the waters and the clouds,

کنار آبدان گشته بشاخ ارغوان حامل  
سحاب ساجگون گشته بطفل عاجگون حنّی  
یکی چون دیده یعقوب و دیگر چون رخ یوسف  
سه دیگر چون دل فرعون چهارم چون کف موسی

The pool's edge is pregnant with the branches of *Arglūwan*<sup>1</sup>;  
the ebony-coloured cloud is pregnant with ivory-coloured  
infants.

The first is like the eyes of Jacob, the second like the face  
of Joseph; the third like the heart of Pharaoh the fourth  
like the hand of Moses.

The rain-drops are milk for baby flowers.

آن قطره باران سحرگامی بنگر      بطرف گل ناشگفیده بر میار  
همچو مرپستان بر روی عروسان      و اندر مرپستان بشیر آمده هموار

Observe that rain-drop of a morning, dancing round the florets,  
like the nipples of fairy-faced brides, to which milk is  
continually coming.

When infinite is the cloud's progeny<sup>2</sup> and the  
night is delivered of a child every night;

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<sup>1</sup> A tree whose fruit and flower are of a beautiful red.

<sup>2</sup> See *supra*, pp. 195—6.

*The Poetry of Minuchikri*

شي گيسو فروهشته بدامن پلاش معبرو قيريش گرزن  
بکردار زنی زنگي که هرشب بزاید کودکی بلغاري آن زن

The night with her locks flowing loose over her drapery, her head-dress of sack-cloth, and her crown of pitch, is like an Ethiopian woman who gives birth every night to a Bulgarian babe.

and three hundred daughters are born to the pomegranate;

آن نار مهيدون بزین حامله ماند واندر شکم حامله مشتی پسرانه

مادر بچه را بادو پسر آرد ياسه وين نار چرا مادر سيصد بچگانست

And that pomegranate moreover is like a pregnant woman in whose womb are clasped infants :

.....

A (human) mother gives birth to twins or triplets; why is this pomegranate the mother of three hundred babes ?

and one hundred and fifty to the grape;

شاخ انگور کهن دختر کان زاد بسی  
که نه از درد بفاليد و نه برزد نفسي

همه را زاد يک دفعه نه پيشی نه پسی  
نه ورا قابله بود نه فرايد رمي

اين چنين آسان فرزند نزادست کي  
که نه در دي بگرفته است متواتر نه تي

## *Studies in Persian Literature*

چون بزاد آن بچکانرا سراو گشت دژم  
واندر آویخت بدوده بچکان را به شکم  
بچکان زاد مذور همه بی قد و قدم  
صد و سی بچه واندر زده دودست بهم  
دو سراندر شکم هر يك نه پیش و نه کم  
نه در ایشان متغوانی نه رگی فی عصبی

The old vine creeper gave birth to several babes without travail or tremor.

She gave birth to them all, simultaneously and not successively; she had no midwife or assistant.

There has never been a confinement so easy; she neither had labour-pain nor (puerperal) fever.

She had a (neuralgic) head when her babes were born ; to her placenta she kept them hanging by the umbilical cord.

She gave birth to round babes without height or feet—one hundred and fifty babes, with their hands clasped.

Neither more nor less (but just) two heads in the abdomen of each ; and all without bones, or veins, or nerves.

why should the poet alone be barren? He never puts that question to himself—being conscious perhaps that his sterility has made Persian Literature fertile.

***The Schools of 'Unsuri and Firdawsi .  
the Present and the Past***



## *The Schools of 'Unsuri and Firdawsi*

AMONG the permanent contributions of Ghazna-wide Persia to Persian thought are the two rival schools of 'Unsuri and Firdawsi—the one individualistic and social, the other nationalistic and political. The Persian Ascendancy was favourable to both ; but their subsequent progress was to be determined by a reversal of Darwin's theory—it was the survival of the unfit. For during the entire period between the death of Sultan Mahmud and the accession of Nasiruddin Shah the Qachar there is no indication whatever of a school of Firdawsi. The *Shah-Nama* continued to be read but its creed remained professedly idealistic. All applauded Firdawsi but none followed him ; his precepts remained precepts.

The *Shah-Nama* indeed was no *Contrat Sociale*. Firdawsi's nationalism was but Persian imperialism, and that imperialism served to strengthen Persian despotism. The Persian who read the *Shah-Nama* disliked the Arab without liking the Persian, while the king ground them both to powder.

For 'Unsuri's school, therefore, the field was clear. The rule of the reigning House, whether Ghaznawide, Seljuq, Mongol, Safawi, or Qachar, was in this alike, that it was despotic ; different masters effected no difference in the form of



## *Studies in Persian Literature*

government, the Safawi being as absolute as the Mongol. Hence the panegyrist who wanted an autocracy<sup>1</sup> thrived. Hence also 'Unsuri the father of panegyrists.

This position, then, of a rapidly expanding school of 'Unsuri and an opposite school of Firdawsi represented almost solely by himself, remained constant during nine hundred years. Even the Mongol invasion, much as it upset the old order of things, was not powerful enough to disturb this constancy. The fall of the Abbaside Caliphate, though it made the land a debris, left the survivors intact. The Persian of 1300 A. D. was but the Persian of 1200 A. D.; and found the *diwan* of 'Unsuri as serviceable or even more serviceable than before.

The date, therefore, of 1258 A. D. is of little significance in Persian Literary History. The date of any significance falls some centuries later, in 1906 A. D., when Despotism Persia was separated from Constitutional Persia, that is, Persia of the Persians from Persia of the Qachars or the Mongols, the Arabs or the Achaemenians. Just two decades before this date, we have, in a sense, Ghaznawide Persia reproduced. The

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the story in the *Gulistan*, where a *qasida*-writer seeks the patronage of the Chief of the Robbers.

### *The Schools of 'Unsuri and Firdawsi*

school of mysticism has now no role to play, having exhausted itself; it played no role then, having hardly been formulated. As a corollary, the *ghazal* has lost its popularity: it has now become unpopular through perfection, as it was unpopular then through imperfection. Religious fanaticism has manifested itself in anti-Babiism, as it had shown itself then in anti-Hinduism. But Islam now as then is only a political ruse—it is not for the kingdom of God that the pious Muhammadan puts on his piety.

Our chief interest, however, lies in the renewed co-existence of the schools of 'Unsuri and Firdawsi. The *Shah-Nama* did not revive the national movement; on the contrary, the movement revived the *Shah-Nama*. But the relationship of cause and effect is immaterial. It is the re-appearance of patriotic poetry in the nineteenth century that links Persia of the Qachars directly with Ghaznawide Persia.

II

This relationship is not of our own making. We have not even sought for it; it compels recognition by its own obviousness. Is not Mirza Aqa Khan's satire on Nasiruddin Shah (A) a repetition of Firdausi's satire on Mahmud? Or Qaani's praise of his beloved (B) a mere re-cast of 'Unsuri's eulogy of his Zeeba-Rukh?

A

*Firdausi's Shah-Nama*

*Mirza Aqa Khan's Nama-i-Bastani*

.....  
 قسم که دارم ز روشن دلی بیل مهر جان نمی و علی  
 نکردند جز خویی و راستی نگشتند کرد کم و کاستی  
 کرت زین بد آید گناه منست چنین است و این رسم و راه منست  
 باین زاده ام هم باین بگندم چنان دان که خاک همی جیدم  
 اگر شاه را شاه بودی هدر بر نهادی مرا تاج زر  
 و گسر مادر شاه بانو بدی مراسم و زرتا بزافو بدی

نوتا باشی ای خسرو نامور سربازان کسی را که دارد هنر  
 بویژه که باشد ز روشن دلی بجان دوست دار نمی و علی  
 و گیتی بخشیم بجز راستی نگشتم بگرد کم و کاستی  
 کرت زین بد آمد گناه منست که این شیوه آئین و راه منست  
 باین زاده ام هم باین بگندم وزن فخر بر چرخ سایه سرم  
 اگر شاه را بود حسن نهان مرا ساختی بی نیاز از جهان  
 و گسر از مسلمانیش بود هر بیتی مرا شهره کردی بدهر

<sup>1</sup> Browne E. G., *The Persian Revolution*, p. 409.

چو اندر ناراش بزرگي نبود نیارست نام بزرگان نشود  
 پستی به از شهر یاری چنین که نه کیش دارد نه آئین نه دین  
 مراهم دادی که دریای پیل نت را بسام چو دریای فیل  
 توهم که دارم ز روشندی بدل مهر جان بسی و علی

.....

I am not afraid, for, through the illumination of my  
 heart, I bear cordial love to the Prophet  
 and 'Ali.

Naught have they done save righteousness and  
 piety; they have not pursued error and defect.

If this thou dost dislike, the fault is mine—it is so,  
 for this is my way and practice.

In this I was born and in this I shall pass away.  
 Know that I am as dust at the feet of 'Ali.

چو درخون او جوهر شرک بود ز توجیه اسلام خشنش فرود  
 پستی به از شهر یاری چنین که نه کیش دارد نه آئین نه دین  
 مراهم دادی که در اردیل تم را بفرخبر بندی چو پیل  
 ز کشتن توهم که آزاده ام ز مادر همی مرگ را زاده ام

Till thou art alive, O renowned King, vex not the  
 man of talent.

Especially if through the illumination of his heart,  
 he be a devoted friend of the Prophet  
 and 'Ali.

I have sought naught from the world save righteous-  
 ness; I have not pursued error and defect.

If this thou dost dislike, the fault is mine for this is  
 my way and practice.

In this I was born and in this I shall pass away and  
 in this pride I exalt my head to the clouds.

## *Studies in Persian Literature*

### *Firdawsi's Shah-Nama*

Had the king a king for a father, he would have put  
a crown on my head.

And had the king's mother been a lady I would  
have been knee-deep in gold and silver.

Since there was no nobility in his ancestry he could  
not brook to hear the names of noble  
people.

A farthing is better than such a king who has  
neither religion nor creed nor code.

You threatened to crush my body under foot of  
an elephant, like the River Nile.

I fear not for, through the illumination of my heart,  
I bear cordial love to the Prophet and 'Ali.

### *Mirza Aqa Khan's Nama-i-Baslan*

Had the king possessed 'spiritual perceptions'<sup>1</sup> he  
would have made me independent of the  
world.

And had he any love for Islam he would have made  
me famous throughout the world for my  
virtue.

Since the essence of infidelity was in his blood, he  
was incensed at the unification of Islam.

A farthing is better than such a king who has  
neither religion nor creed nor code.

You threatened to bind me in Ardbil with chains,  
like a (rogue-) elephant.

I fear not death, being free; I was born to die even  
from my mother's womb.

---

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Browne's words.

دل آرای دل آرای غم انجای غم افزای  
 نکو روی نکو رای بحسن اندر جهان سرور  
 سنن بوی شبه موی بلا جوی جفا کوی  
 پدیزادی پدیروی پدیروی پدیروی  
 شگفته لاله رخساره حجاب لاله چهره  
 برازجاج و دل از غاره تن از شیر و لب از شکر  
 رخ چون نوشگفته گل همه گلین برنگه مل  
 همه شمشاد پر سنبل همه بیجاده پر شکر  
 به رواز نیکوی معنی به غمز از جادوی دعوی  
 به چهری حجت مانی بغیوبی حجت آذر

Heart-comforting, heart-enthalling, arousing in-  
 satiety and love-melancholy ; lovely in mind  
 and body, the queen of the world in beauty.

بویزه بانی شنگول و شوخ و شنگ و بی پروا  
 سخن پرداز و خوش آواز و افسون ساز و جیات کر  
 سنن خوی و سنن بوی و سنن روی و سنن سیبا  
 پدیر طبع و پدیر زاد و پدیر چهر و پدیر پیکر  
 برش دیبا فرش زیبا قدش طوبی خدش جنت  
 تنش روشن خطش جوشن رخسار گلشن لبش شکر  
 دو طاروت و دو مارت و دو کلپرک و دو مرچانش  
 بر از خواب و پدیر از تاب و پدیر از آب و پدیر از شکر  
 چو سبین سرون کس هست روی و موی و چهر و لب  
 مه روشن شب تاری گل سوری می احمد

Especially with a damsel, fascinating, wanton, amor-  
 ous and careless ; fluent her words and sweet  
 her voice—a bundle of wiles and bewitching arts.

'Unsurî

Of lily fragrance, and hair like jet, trouble-seeking,  
tormenting ; of fairy birth, fairy face, fairy  
cheeks, and fairy form.

Her cheeks the opened tulip, her tresses tulip-veils<sup>1</sup>  
her bosom ivory, her heart stone, her body  
milk, and her lips sugar.

Thy cheeks like the new-blown rose, and thy roses  
all of the colour of wine ; thy box-tree<sup>2</sup> full  
of hyacinths, thy rubies full of sugar.

In face, the nectar of loveliness, in coy glances,  
the spell of magic ; in aspect, the proof of  
Manes, in beauty the proof of Azer.<sup>4</sup>

Each pupil has imitated his master—the one with slight re-wording and shifting of the contents, the other with noticeable alterations and improvements.

Qasni

Of lily disposition, lily fragrance, lily face, lily  
aspect ; of fairy temperament, fairy birth, fairy  
face, and fairy form.

Her bosom brocade, her elegance exquisite, her  
stature 'Tuba,<sup>3</sup> her cheeks Paradise ; her  
body bright, her down a cuirass, her face a  
garden, and her lips sugar.

Her two Haruts, and her two Maruts, her two rose-  
petals, and her two corals—full of languor,  
full of ardour, full of lustre, full of sugar.

My silver cypress has face, hair, cheeks, and lips  
like the bright moon, the dark night, the  
red rose, and the red wine.

<sup>1</sup> Because falling over the face they veil the colour of the tulip cheeks.

<sup>2</sup> and <sup>3</sup> Erect stature.

<sup>4</sup> Azer, the father of Abraham, was a famous idol-maker.

That Mirza Aqa Khan should have followed Firdaws almost word for word is perhaps comprehensible for it is the first attempt to restore an extinct school to life and has, in consequence, found expression in mere mimicry.

More difficult to understand is Qaani's imitativeness. Himself a poet born, he had studied the classical poets of Persia with systematic thoroughness. The influence of Hafiz, Salman, Sa'di, Khaqani, and many others, is unmistakable.

Hafiz,

*Hafiz*

تک درویش مگیرا نبود سیم و زرش  
وزفت سیم شمارا شک و رخش را زرگیر

Avoid not the poor man if he lack gold and silver;  
but rather, because of his sorrow for thee,  
consider his face gold and his tears silver.

Salman,

*Salman*

قدر قدرت قضا فرمان شیشه شیخ حسن نوبان  
جهانگیر و جهان بخش و جهان دار و جهان داود

*Qaani*

گدش گر نبود سیم و زرشب میکن  
چهرم ز زرشب و اشک مرا سیم انکار

I told her "Taunt not, if I have no gold or silver.  
Consider my face gold and my tears silver."

*Qaani*

قوی حال و قوی پال و قوی بال و قوی بازو  
جهان جوئی و جهان گیر و جهان دار و جهان داود



نیارد همدودح و شکر و توصیف گرش باشد  
بسط آمد شجر خامه ناله جهان دفتر

Of strong quality, strong crest, strong wing, strong arm; world-seeking, world-taking, world-possessor, world-ruler.

He cannot express thy praise, glory, merit or his gratitude, though he have the ocean for ink, the tree for a pen, the heavens for paper, and the world for a book.

امیرا خسروا شاهان نوشتن وصف تو تتوان  
بصد قرن و بصد دست و بصد کاک و بصد دفتر

In potency, Fate; in mandate, Destiny; the monarch Shaikh Hasan Nuyan, world-taker, world-bestower, world-possessor, world-ruler.

O Master! Monarch! King! It is not possible to write thy praise though given a hundred epochs, a hundred hands, a hundred pens, and a hundred books.

Sa'di,

Sa'di

یک طلعت زیبا به از هزار خلعت دیا

One lovely face is better than a thousand dresses of brocade.

ذوالفقار علی در نیام و زبان سمدی در کام

Qaani

خود نیندی مگر که مایه عشرت

طلعت زیبا بود نه خلعت دیا

But have you never heard that the essence of happiness is a lovely face and not a dress of brocade?

گفتن ای خادم تو میدانی زبان در کام من

هست در زندگی نایب مناب ذوالفقار

The Zulficar of 'Ali in its scabbard and the tongue of S'adi in his mouth.

ز کوه مال بدرکن که فخله رز را چو بانجان ببرد بیشتر دهد انگور

Render alms-tax on thy property for the vine yields more grapes when the gardener prunes the shoots.

Khaqani,

*Khaqani*

خاقان اکبر که شرف هستش سلاطین در کف

باران جود از ابرک شرفا و غربا ریخته

تا خدروی شرواز بود چه جای تو شرواز بود

چون ارسلان سلطان بود کو آب بنزار ریخته

بر رقصه نظم دری قایم منم در شاعری

با من بقای عنصری وقت عاذا ریخته

I said, "O servant, dost thou know that the tongue in my mouth is in keenness the vicegerent of Zulficar?"

تا طور از نخوت برد شاخ و برگ تاک  
تا که از بریدنش شود انگور بیشتر

The vine-keeper, at the beginning (of the season), prunes the shoots and leaves of the vine that the yield of grapes may increase.

*Qaani*

در قصر دریا شد صدف بر خطبت خود مصروف

تا شه لالی ز ابرک شرفا و غربا ریخته

انگور ز تیغ جانشان و انگور ز قندیر گران

هم خون سلطان ارسلان هم آب بنزار ریخته

کنول منم در شاعری قایم مقام عنصری

از نظم الفاظ دری نیرنگ منی ریخته

## Khaqani

The great Khaqan, whose is the honour of having emperors for proteges, rains, over the East and the West, the rain of generosity from the cloud of his hand.

What room is there for Nushirwan when there is a King of Shirwan? He is like Sultan Arslan who has shattered the prestige of Bughra.

In the domain of Persian verse my place is secure; confronted with me, 'Unsuri is deprived of his immortality.

زلف و رخسار زره با سپر آمیخته اند

The tresses and cheeks—with the mail-coat the shield they have combined.

بربط از هست زبان گوید و خود نا شنواست  
زیبتش گفتی با کوش کر آمیخته اند

## Qasni

The mother-of-pearl hid itself in the depths of the sea, confessedly ashamed of itself, since the king has rained, over the East and the West, pearls from the cloud of his hand.

Who, by his life-taking scimitar and his infinite power, has shed both the blood of Arslan and shattered also the prestige of Bughra.

Today, in the domain of poetry, I am in the place of 'Unsuri; by my Persian words and verses, I have displayed the magic of meaning.

جهد سنبل چو زره عارض نسرین چو سپر  
از پی کینه زره با سپر آمیخته اند

The hyacinthine tresses like a coat of mail, the roseate cheeks like a shield—for the sake of vengeance, with the mail-coat the shield they have combined.

چنگدر جنگ خوش آهنگه کر آهنگش  
موشه شتوای با کوش کر آمیخته اند

The harp speaks in eight tongues yet itself is deaf; its fluency, thou wouldst say, with deaf ears they have combined.

ریحان روح از روی می جان را فتوح از روی می  
بزم صبح از خوی می فردوس کردار آمده  
راز حلیمان شنو آن داغ روحانی شنو  
اشمار خاقانی شنو چون در شہوار آمده

The fragrance of the soul is from the odour of wine, the victory of life is from the colour of wine; the drinking party of the morning through the influence of wine, wears an aspect Elysian.

Listen to the secrets of Solomon, listen to the sorrows of the soul; listen to the verses of Khaqani, that are strung like royal pearls.

Anwari,

Anwari

اینکه نمی بینم به بیدار بست با بخواب  
خوشن را در چنین نعمت پس از چندین عذاب

The cymbal in the hand (of the musician), by its sweet melody, endows deaf ears with the faculty of hearing.

بزرگ صبح از پی بود جان را فتوح از پی بود  
تقریب روح از پی بود هر که افکار آمده  
شاهما بپا آتی نگر خاقانی شنو  
فی روح خاقانی نگر اینک بگفتار آمده

The substance of the morning draught is from wine, the victory of life is from wine; the joy of the soul is from wine whenever worries plague us.

O King look at Qaani, look<sup>at</sup> the second Khaqani; nay, look at the soul of Khaqani, and hear it speak.

Qaani

چشم بخت عالمی از خواب غم بیدار شد  
اینکه می بینم به بیدار بست یا رب با بخواب

Is it in sleep or in wakefulness that I see myself  
in such comfort after such torment?

Farrukhi,

*Farrukhi*

هر جا خیمه است خفته عاشقی با دوست مست  
هر جا سبزه است شادان یاری از دیدار بار  
سبزهها با باسنگ چنگ مطربان چرب دست  
خیمها با بانگ نوش سائیان می گسار  
عاشقان بوس و کنار و نیکوان ناز و عتاب  
مطربان رود و سرود و خفتگان خواب و خمار

Every tent contains a lover resting in his sweet-  
heart's arms; every patch of grass revealeth  
to a friend a favourite's charms.

Harpes are sounding midst the verdure, minstrels  
sing their lays divine; tents resound with  
clink of glasses as the pages pour the wine.

Kisses, clasplings from the lovers, coy reproaches  
from the fair; wine-born slumbers for the  
sleepers, while the minstrels wake the air.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The translation of Farrukhi is by Prof. Browne.

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The eye of the world's good fortune has opened  
from the sleep of sorrow; am I seeing this  
in sleep, my God, or in wakefulness?

*Qaani*

زیر هر شاهی ظریفی با ظریفی باده نوش  
پای هر سری حریفی با حریفی می گسار  
یک طرف غوغای عود و ریبط و زمهرار و چنگ  
یک طرف آوای کبک وصلل و دراج و سار  
صوفی اینجا در سماع و مطرب اینجا در سرود  
عاشق اینجا شادمان و دلبر اینجا شاد خوار

Beneath every bough a belle with a wine-drinking  
beau; at the foot of every cypress a gallant  
with a wine-giving flirt.

Here, the tunes of lutes, and cymbals and harps,  
and flutes; there, the notes of partridges,  
ringdoves, woodcocks, and starlings.

The mystic here in his (mystical) dance, and the  
minstrel there in ecstasy; the lover here  
jubilant and the beloved there exultant.

Firdawsi,

*Firdawsi*

اگر ماه جوی هم روی اوست  
وگرمک بوی همه بوی اوست  
بهشتت سر تا سر آراسته  
پد آرایش و را مش و خواسته

If thou desirest the moon, there's her face ; and  
if thou wouldst inhale musk, there's her  
fragrance.

Of Paradise she, and wrapped from head to foot in  
fragrance, clinging dress, and jewellery.

'Unsuri

*'Unsuri*

فراخ جیوهون چون کوه شد زبسکه درو  
کلاه و ترکش و زین بود و جامه و دستار

*Qaani*

هوی باده گرخواهی یوس آن لعل می گونش  
شبنم ناله گرخواهی یوس آن جعد مشکش  
بهشتی هست بس خرم که یک شهر است رضوانش  
عروس هست بس زیبا که یک ملک است کایش

If thou hast the desire of the cup, kiss that wine-red  
ruby of hers ; if thou desirest the odour of  
the musk-pod, kiss those musky locks of hers.

Of Paradise she, and so charming that a whole city  
is her garden ; a bride she, and so lovely  
that a whole country is her dowry.

*Qaani*

کسی که زنده ماند است از آن هر پیمان  
 اگر چه تنش درست است هست چون پیر  
 به منزش اندر تیغ اسب اگر بود خفته  
 به چمنش اندر نیز است اگر بود بیدار  
 اگر بچند بند نهایی اواز باد  
 گمان کند که می بر بگر خورود مسار  
 اگر سوال کند گوید ای سوار من  
 و گر جواب دهد گوید ای ملک زهار

The expanse of the Oxus has become like a mountain,  
 such abundance there is of helmets, quivers,  
 saddles, coats, and turbans.

Whosoever is left alive of those fugitives though  
 his body be whole is yet like the sick.

There's the dagger in his brain if he be asleep, and  
 the arrow in his eye if he be awake.

If his dress but move in the wind he believes that  
 he is receiving the lance in his breast.

بدگال تو هر جا که رود در خطر است  
 آنچه بیند نه بود راه مگر وقت فرار  
 ناخن خویش می بیند و پندارد تیغ  
 دست بر مزه خود مالده و انگارد مار  
 سایه خویش می بیند و بگریزد از او  
 گوید این لشکر چه است که آید بفشار  
 شفق از چرخ می بیند و فریاد کند  
 کز پی سوختن میر بر افروخته تار

Thy malignant foe wherever he goes is in danger ;  
 he sees no way but the way of flight.

He sees his own nails and thinks they are daggers ;  
 he rubs his hand over his eyelashes and  
 thinks they are serpents.

He sees his own shadow and flies from it saying :  
 "This is the Amir's army coming in a (long)  
 line."

If he asks, he says : "O rider, do not strike"; and if he answers at all, he says, "O King, spare me, I pray!"

اگر سوال کند گوید ای سوار مژده  
وگر جواب دهد گوید ای مالک زناز

If he asks, he says: "O rider, do not strike;" and if he answers at all, he says, "O King, spare me, I pray!"

He sees the dawn in the sky and cries out, "To burn me the Amir has lighted a fire."

گوی زبان خشم تو در روزگار تو  
مردی وگر نداد جز حرف زینار

During thy time, thy enemy, thou wouldst think knows no other word but "spare."

He has absorbed and assimilated them all, and the result is his *diwan*—an excellent work of compilation, the sources so skilfully appropriated that the work appears original. The Qaani that we should have liked to have known would have been a modern poet of the Qachar period, the Qaani that we do know is a second Khaqani' desirous of being a second Unsuri<sup>2</sup>.

Arrested inward growth, self-effacement, mimicry, plagiarism—such are the after-effects of isolation, the reflex-effects of surrender to earlier literature.

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, pp. 217-218.



## *Studies in Persian Literature*

It had often struck me that the entire method of comparative literary criticism was defective in its application to Persian poetry in that it ignored the principle of inward growth and therefore the necessity of an ontogenetic arrangement of the *diwan*. Unless Persian *diwans* are graded according to the order of production of poems, and these in turn assorted into poems of infancy, youth, and maturity errors arising from haphazard selections cannot be avoided. Hafiz and Sa'di may disagree but surely this point is not settled by putting the young Hafiz in a parallel column against the centenarian Sa'di. Difference of talent and mental outlook can only appear when the difference of age has first been adjusted, when, for example, the mature productions of Hafiz are matched against the mature productions of Sa'di—and this is precisely what parallel extracts from alphabetically arranged *diwans* fail to do.

The need therefore for a re-arrangement of *diwans* according to time and merit remains but, with *qasida*-writers especially, it is not so imperative as I was induced to believe. Court-poets have seldom any inward growth. They remain at sixty as they were at twenty. The odes of Qaani, for example, on Fath 'Ali Shah have the same value as those on Nasiru'd-Din Shah.

And with the stagnation of intellect there is

predisposition to imitation. Panegyrists are usually objective poets. And so the trouble begins. For their profession inclines them to untruth, as their art inclines them to truth. The result is a monster—natural in part, and in part artificial—nowhere to be found except in Persian *diwans*. There it stalks in abundance, sometimes as a man, sometimes as a woman, and sometimes as a beast.<sup>1</sup>

And because this monster cannot always be created but has rather to be synthesised from its elements, every succeeding panegyrist turns to his predecessor for help and guidance, and explores him and exploits him, working backwards till he gets to 'Unsuri, the father of panegyrists as we have called him. And as 'Unsuri has said the entire tribe has said: I find not a jot or tittle difference between the first panegyrist and the last, between 'Unsuri and Qaani.

'Unsuri, for example gives no details about the human voice—Qaani, therefore, follows suit: 'sweet-voiced' is as far as he goes.<sup>1</sup> Very few Persian poets have studied voice and even these have a singularly poor vocabulary. Sa'di has to fall back upon the word 'sweet' three times in one small paragraph :

عیش آوازی که میخجره داودی آب از جریان و مرغ از طیران

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<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, pp. 197-198.

## Studies in Persian Literature

باز دارد۔ پس به وضیلت آن فضیلت دل مشتاقان میدکند و ارباب  
معنی بنادمت او رغبت نمایند و با انواع خدمت کنند

چه خوش باشد آهنگ نرم حزین بگوش حریفان مست صبح  
به از روی زیباست آواز خوش که این حظ نفس است و آن فوت روح

The person with a *sweet* voice restrains, with his David's throat, the waters from flowing and the birds from flying ; wherefore by means of this gift he captivates the hearts of enthusiasts—so connoisseurs show an inclination for his company, and serve him in various ways.

How *sweet* is the gentle and low voice to the ears of revellers drunk with the morning draught !

Better than a pleasant face is a *sweet* voice, for that pleases the senses and this nourishes the soul.

and the same word خوش (*sweet*), or its equivalent شیرین (*sweet*), marks the highest achievement of Hafiz in his *diwan*,

لفظ فصیح شیرین قد بلند چابک روی لطیف نازک چشم خوش و کشیده

*Sweet*, the eloquent words ; agile, the erect stature ; delicate the elegant face ; lovely, the eyes and drawn out.

and of Nidhami of Ganja in his *Sikandar-nama*.

مرویدی نوائین ترا صد درود	مرا بنده هر یکدگر گون مرود
جگر گرم شد خون بپوش آمدش	چو آن لحن شیرین بگوش آمدش
دگر باره خندید کین گریه چیست	بر آن لحن و آواز غنی گریست
که آن خنده و گریه آرد بهم	شگفتی بود لحن آن زیر و بم

## *The Past and the Present*

Each one was singing a different song, a song more fresh than a hundred benedictions.

When that *sweet* tune reached his ears, his heart was warmed and the blood danced in him.

He wept a little over that tune and voice and then laughed at his (meaningless) weeping.

Strange must be the alto and bass of that tune which can produce both laughter and tears.

Considering feminine beauty more broadly we find that there are only certain points emphasised by 'Unsuri. He has described the hair, the eye-brows, eyes, and eye-lashes, the cheeks, lips, and teeth, the down on the cheeks, the beauty-spot and cleft, the stature and colour of the body, the shoulders and breasts, the hair-thin waist and the swelling hips, the palms of the hands, the finger-tips and lower legs; whilst the forehead, the ears<sup>1</sup> and voice, the neck and the nose are all omitted. And this same damsel is to be seen dancing in and out of Qaani's pages; she has survived unchanged for nine hundred years, a songless coquette.<sup>2</sup> Is it irrational to suppose that she has not much longer to live? For 'Unsuri's school in Constitutional Persia has about the same scope and power of development as Firdawsi's had in Despotic.

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<sup>1</sup> The ear-lobes, however, are mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> *Supra*, p. 213.

**ALIGARH: *Printed by Abdul Ali Khan, At the Jamia Millia Press.***

